



Type: Magazine Article

Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon: Lesson 48—"A New Witness for Christ"

Author(s): Leland H. Monson

Source: *Relief Society Magazine*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (February 1957), pp. 123-128

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: The objective of this lesson is to show that firm testimonies of the divinity of Christ and rich blessings come to those who study The Book of Mormon with a prayerful heart and practice its teachings in their lives.



LESSON DEPARTMENT

Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 48—"A New Witness for Christ"

Elder Leland H. Monson

For Tuesday, May 7, 1957

Objective: To show that firm testimonies of the divinity of Christ and rich blessings come to those who study The Book of Mormon with a prayerful heart and practice its teachings in their lives.

NOW that we have completed our study of The Book of Mormon and have read its pages according to the instructions of Moroni, we are entitled to the promised blessings:

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 (Moroni 10:4).

We should not expect the fulfillment of the promise, however, if we have not met all of the conditions. We must have asked the Eternal Father ". . . with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ . . ." and we must have read the book.

As we contemplate the message of this great book, we should be-

come convinced that Latter-day Saints do not need to rely upon external evidence, powerful as it is, to gain a testimony of the book. We can, from following Moroni's exhortation, know that it is all that it purports to be, a record of the Jaredites and the Nephites and the Lamanites, divinely preserved and brought forth in this, the last dispensation of the fulness of times to reaffirm and re-establish in the minds of men ". . . that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations . . ." (Title Page of The Book of Mormon).

The record contains the fulness of the gospel as delivered to the Nephites, and will, according to the Prophet Joseph Smith, bring us, by following its precepts, nearer to God than any other religious book. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote:

. . . I told the brethren 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 (*D. H. C. IV, page 461*).

President Joseph F. Smith stated that The Book of Mormon is:

. . . the only book written which has the personal endorsement of God by His voice (*The Voice From the Dust*).

And President Heber J. Grant, informing us about his experience with The Book of Mormon, wrote:

As a boy of fifteen I read, carefully and prayerfully, the Book of Mormon, and there came into my heart an abiding and firm testimony of its divine authenticity. From that day to this its wonderful teachings have been a comfort, a blessing and a guide to me.

I thank God from the bottom of my heart that I read the life of Nephi in my youth. I fell in love with him then, and his life has influenced mine for good more than that of any other character in ancient history, sacred or profane—save only the Redeemer of the world (*The Voice From the Dust*).

In an article entitled, "Books That Influenced America," a selection was made of the one hundred books printed before 1900 which had the most influence on the life and culture of the American people. In a chronological list of the books appears the name of The Book of Mormon.

This book, however, has not only had an influence upon the lives of Americans, it has influenced all others from the various countries of the world who have accepted its truth and embraced its teachings. In the 126 years since the first edition appeared, over 2,500,000 copies of The Book of Mormon have been

printed. With the possible exception of the Bible, The Book of Mormon has been translated into more languages than has any other book. Currently, editions of the book are available in twenty-one different languages: English, Danish, German, French, Italian, Welsh, Hawaiian, Swedish, Maori, Dutch, Samoan, Tahitian, Turkish, Japanese, Czechoslovakian, Armenian, Portuguese, Tongan, Deseret Alphabet, Spanish, Norwegian and Braille. It has also been translated into Hindoostani, Hebrew, Russian, Finnish, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, Filipino, Bulgarian, and Greek. However, it has not, as yet, been published in these languages. Thus we see that The Book of Mormon has gone forth as a messenger of the truth to many peoples of many lands testifying of the divinity and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon As a Witness for Christ

Throughout The Book of Mormon history the prophets taught the peoples on this Western Hemisphere about the coming of the Savior, his mission here upon the earth, and the fact that, after his resurrection, he would visit the people on the Western Hemisphere.

On this continent, as on the eastern, Jesus manifested himself from time to time to his faithful servants, before his coming in the flesh. He was the guide of his people, the guardian of the church and the revealer of the mind and will of the Godhead (*Dictionary of The Book of Mormon, by Elder George Reynolds, page 133, 1954 edition*).

When Jesus appeared unto the Nephites in the flesh he did so as a glorified, resurrected Being coming out of the heavens. He

stretched forth his hand to the multitude saying:

. . . 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.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

. . . and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come (3 Nephi 11:11-15).

After Jesus' ministry here upon the earth, he continued to guide and direct the Nephite peoples, manifesting himself from time to time unto his chosen prophets. Moroni testifies of this, for in his farewell to the Gentiles he writes:

And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things:

And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace

of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen (Ether 12:39, 41).

The Book of Mormon As a History

The Book of Mormon is a history of ancient peoples upon the American continent. It portrays their problems and struggles, the exhortations of their prophets and leaders, and the ministry of the resurrected Savior among them as he organized his Church and established its principles and ordinances.

Those principles which governed and promoted successful and happy living among those ancient peoples have not changed. The truths are eternal. Father Lehi, in teaching his children, said, ". . . men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25); and each succeeding prophet throughout the entire scripture relates how this joy may be obtained, not only in this life but in the life to come. The mighty prophet, Alma, expressed this fundamental truth in these words:

. . . inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land . . . for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day (Alma 36:1, 3).

Alma says that through following this advice, ". . . the Lord doth give me exceeding great joy in the fruit of my labors" (Alma 36:25). (See also Alma 41:5-7; Mosiah 1:7; 2 Nephi 1:20; 1 Nephi 22:31; 1 Nephi 4:14.)

Contents of The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon was translated in a little over two months by

a young man in his middle twenties who had relatively little schooling. No human being, regardless of his background, training, and ability could, of himself, have created such a monumental work in so short a time. The book consists of 522 pages and has:

. . . fifteen main parts or divisions, known, with one exception, as books, each designated by the name of its principal author (Book of Mormon, Brief Analysis of The Book of Mormon).

Elder Hugh B. Brown states that it has:

. . . fifty-four chapters dealing with wars, twenty-one historical chapters, fifty-five chapters on visions and prophecies . . . seventy-one chapters on doctrine and exhortation, twenty-one chapters on the ministry of Christ.

As a literary work, Elder Brown points out, The Book of Mormon employs:

. . . figures of speech, similies, metaphors, narrations, exposition, description, oratory, epic, lyric, logic, and parables. . .

For over one hundred years, some of the best students and scholars of the world have been trying to prove from the Bible that the Book of Mormon is false, but not one of them has been able to prove that anything in the Book of Mormon is not in strict harmony with the scriptures, with the Bible and with the Word of God ("The Profile of a Prophet," by Elder Hugh B. Brown).

The Book of Mormon Directed to a Future Generation

The Book of Mormon is probably the only book ever written which is directed to a future, unseen generation. Nephi, the son of Lehi, says of his writings:

Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make

these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.

Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of kings and the wars and contentions of my people.

Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not (1 Nephi 9:3-5).

The Savior himself said:

. . . write the things which I have told you; and according to the time and the will of the Father they shall go forth unto the Gentiles (3 Nephi 23:4).

The prophet Mormon who abridged the large plates of Nephi and whose son Moroni, completed the writings and sealed them up, did so with the express conviction that they would be discovered and read by a generation which would long succeed them. In his own words, Mormon said:

Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob; and they are written after this manner, because it is known of God that wickedness will not bring them forth unto them; and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth in his own due time.

And this is the commandment which I have received; and behold, they shall come forth according to the commandment of the Lord, when he shall see fit, in his wisdom (Mormon 5:12-13).

Mormon also knew the book would be brought forth through the Gentiles:

. . . I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people from the Gentiles, according to

the words which Jesus hath spoken (3 Nephi 26:8).

And Moroni, before he sealed up the records, had this to say:

And it is by faith that my fathers have obtained the promise that these things should come unto their brethren through the Gentiles; therefore the Lord hath commanded me, yea, even Jesus Christ (Ether 12:22).

*Prophecies Concerning the Time
When the Book Should
Be Brought Forth*

Moroni, in writing of Ether's prophecies concerning when this book should be brought forth by the Gentiles, in the latter days, writes that this land should become:

. . . a choice land above all other lands, a chosen land of the Lord; wherefore the Lord would have that all men should serve him who dwell upon the face thereof;

And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven. . . .

Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake . . . that a New Jerusalem should be built up upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph, for . . . the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem, that he might be merciful unto the seed of Joseph that they should perish not, even as he was merciful unto the father of Joseph that he should perish not.

Wherefore, the remnant of the house of Joseph shall be built upon this land; and it shall be a land of their inheritance; and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old. . . .

And there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and they shall be like unto the old save the old have passed away, and all things have become new.

And then cometh the New Jerusalem;

and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb; and they are they who. . . .

. . . were scattered and gathered in from the four quarters of the earth, and from the north countries, and are partakers of the fulfilling of the covenant which God made with their father, Abraham (Ether 13:2 ff.).

Influence of The Book of Mormon

Here is a book which is considered to be divine scripture by only approximately one per cent of the population of the United States. Yet, it has influenced this small group of people so profoundly as to have changed the course of American history. It has become the religious persuader which has altered the lives of thousands of people all over the world and, as such, has caused many to leave their homes, sever their ties with loved ones, and adopt new ways of life, often in a strange land.

The grandeur of this volume was summed up beautifully by Elder Adam S. Bennion who said:

Hours spent with this book are hours spent with the Master and His holy prophets. They are hours which will bring to the reader an inspiration and an enrichment of spirit almost beyond comprehension. Indeed many readers declare that the reading of the Book of Mormon thrills them with a testimony of the truth, as the reading of no other book can. They enjoy the fulfillment of the promise of Moroni as he sealed up the records of Nephite history (*Gleaner Manual* 1932-1933, page 71).

Moroni declares:

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 (Moroni 10:2-4).

Now that we have completed six years of study of The Book of Mormon, the real questions which confront us are:

1. What are we going to do about the wise and workable principles which this great book contains?
2. If we lack a testimony, do we have the faith and desire to put Moroni's promise to the test?
3. Have our testimonies really grown as a result of our study?

For those of us who can honestly give right answers to these questions, then this great book will have fulfilled its purpose in our lives. It will have brought peace and comfort to our souls and rich blessings into our lives, and we shall hope to be numbered among those of whom Alma speaks:

For the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand . . . (Alma 5:58).

Questions on the Lesson

1. Did the reading of The Book of Mormon increase your faith in God? Have some of the sisters express their feelings in this regard.
2. What characters in The Book of Mormon have been most impressive to you? Why?
3. What difference does it make whether we accept Jesus Christ as a great moral teacher or as the Only Begotten Son of God?

Visiting Teacher Messages— Book of Mormon Gems of Truth

Lesson 48—"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" (Moroni 10:4).

Leone O. Jacobs

For Tuesday, May 7, 1957

Objective: To point out that Moroni's promise is certain of fulfillment if prescribed conditions are met.

THIS promise made by Moroni to all who will read The Book of Mormon is unique. No other book carries with it such a guarantee. It is an invitation to all the world to learn of the truthfulness of The