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## Stories from the Book of Mormon: Lesson 1—What is the Book of Mormon?

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## Lesson 1—What Is the Book of Mormon?

(Tuesday, October 26, 1943)

Note: For the full effect of the lesson it is imperative that one or more copies of the Book of Mormon be at hand during the class discussion.

A DIRECT answer to the question, "What is the Book of Mormon?" may be found by a careful reading of the pages which precede the actual Book of Mormon itself. These, in the 1920 edition, are bound with the main text. They contain three highly significant statements which demand serious thought:

### 1. The title page

This comes from the hand of Moroni, the last mortal man to possess the record. He lists there these important facts concerning the book:

It is . . . the record of the people of Nephi, and also the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the House of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile . . . .

Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God . . . .

To show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers . . . .

And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations . . . .

### 2. The pages describing the origin

The coming forth to earth again of this record was by means of an angelic visitation from no other than the same risen Moroni to Joseph Smith. This stirring account is told in the language of simple truth by Joseph Smith himself.

### 3. The page bearing the testimony of witnesses

The sober testimony of three witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, who also saw the angel as he lay before their marveling eyes the golden plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, will be found as the last of these significant statements. As if for good measure the Lord provided eight other witnesses whose testimony is also found on the last page; eight other men who also "saw," and "handled," and "hefted" the plates of gold with engravings thereon which Joseph Smith showed them.

It is suggested that at this point the teacher or some members of the class read aloud the full account of these pages here briefly described which precede the actual text of the Book of Mormon. No more soul-stirring account of the true meaning and purpose of this wonderful record has ever been written. After reading these things proceed with the lesson which follows.

To establish His word in the last days God promised another witness to go hand in hand with the Bible. (Ezekiel 37:15-20) There was to be the Stick of Judah, the Bible, which came by way of the Jews; and the Stick of Joseph, the Book of Mormon, which came by way of another tribe of Israel, that of Joseph.

This latter record was to come "out of the dust," which it literally did, having been hid in the Hill Cumorah. (Isaiah 29:4)

That God could and would bear witness of His great plan of life to all nations is apparent in all His statements recorded in the Bible. Suffice it to say that those who came to inhabit the Americas did so by His command—the first people soon after the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel; the second in 600 B.C. fleeing the destruction of Jerusalem. From this latter exodus two great nations of people sprang up, known as the Nephites and the Lamanites.

The truth of these facts can and will be established as time goes on. Men may be certain of that. Of greater importance to us who have come to know the power of God's word as recorded in the Book of Mormon is this—that *much of the Gospel, plain and precious*, lost through translations of the Bible is given in the Book of Mormon. Herein lies a most powerful means of reaching the human heart. The word of God *clearly understood* is quickly embraced by one who would know the truth. Joseph Smith's story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon becomes more convincing once the words of the book itself are read with an open mind. Note the simplicity of this passage which clearly states the need there will be in the latter days for another witness of Christ and His mission: "But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins—and *not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord,*

*but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them."* (II Nephi 3: 11)

The Bible exists today. Has it brought men to an absolute and unshaken faith in their Redeemer? Would the many, many sects and creeds of religious worship now with us, seemingly based upon the Bible, be an answer to this question? "Christ, the example," they say. "Christ, the leader," they teach. But Christ, the literal Son of God who lived and died for man, and who lives now, resurrected and glorified, to return again—what definite answer has the world for these great questions? God knew even His chosen people would need more convincing word in the days when men would heap to themselves teachers who should turn the truth to fables. (II Timothy 4:3-4) And this word, in wisdom, He kept hid up until its power would strike like a two-edged sword.

If you have not been touched with the simplicity and power of the Gospel, made plain through the words of the Book of Mormon, seek this experience now. The following reading activities may help you. For example, let us carry through the plan for one such reading exercise. Think first of some phase of the Gospel which may need more explanation for a clearer understanding than is found in the Bible; for example, the closing verse of the sixth chapter of Matthew: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This comes as part of the Sermon on the



Mount following the suggestion that one forsake the worldly care of providing food and drink and raiment for the body in order to serve God rather than Mammon. But has not God condemned the idler, and him who refuses to work? What kind of a world would this be if all of us took no thought of the morrow? And yet the Lord has given us these words. Have not you with other thinking Christians often wondered at the inconsistency of this verse? If you follow through the complete text of the Sermon on the Mount there is no suggestion as to whether the Lord meant these words for all the multitude, and hence all men, or for His chosen disciples who were to spend their lives in the service of God. Somehow through the many translations of the Bible this fact was omitted.

When Christ appeared to the Nephites upon the American continent, what was recorded of His visit is more completely given. In III Nephi 13:25 we read: "And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words *He looked upon the twelve whom He had chosen, and said unto them: Remember the words which I have spoken. For behold, ye are they whom I have chosen to minister unto this people. There-*

*fore I say unto you take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."* Read on from this point to the end of the chapter and note how this verse makes plain and logical the meaning of the words of Christ in the New Testament.

### Questions and Readings for Discussion

With the help of other suggested readings given below have the class carry on the discussion as follows: first, answer the questions; second, read the passages given to discover other plain and precious truths of the Gospel brought to light through the Book of Mormon. If time permits each class member could add one found by himself from the Book of Mormon that has brought new light to a truth of the Gospel.

1. What evidence is there in the Bible as to the proper mode of baptism? Name the various ways you know of in which this ordinance has been performed.

For reading, 3 Nephi 11: 16-28.

2. Is infant baptism necessary?

For reading, Moroni, chapter 8.

The following is an additional exercise if needed for the class, but one which could preferably be used for home reading:

3. How does the true doctrine of repentance and restoration work in the lives of men?

For reading, Alma chapters 39-42.

References: James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, Chapters 14, 15.

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## RELATIONSHIP OF THE Y.W.M.I.A. TO THE RELIEF SOCIETY

(Continued from page 376)

is indeed the work of God. Thousands of the youth owe their interest in the Church and their testimony

to the activities of the Mutual Improvement Associations. Thousands, too, of young women have received