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Type: Magazine Article

"Articles of Faith," by James E. Talmage, Lesson 14 - The Book of Mormon

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Source: *Relief Society Magazine*, Vol. 29, No. 12 (December 1942),
pp. 871–873

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

Abstract: Condensation of Chapter XIV of Articles of Faith by Talmage.

LESSON DEPARTMENT



Theology and Testimony

"Articles of Faith," By James E. Talmage

Lesson 14

The Book of Mormon

(Tuesday, March 2, 1943)

Condensation of Chapter XIV of Articles of Faith, by Talmage

(This condensation is placed in the Magazine in the hope that it will result in more class members familiarizing themselves with the lesson.)

What Is the Book of Mormon?

THE Book of Mormon is a divinely inspired record, made by the prophets of the ancient peoples who inhabited the American continent for centuries before and after the time of Christ, which record has been translated in the present generation through the gift of God and by His special appointment. The authorized and inspired translator of these sacred scriptures, through whose instrumentality they have been given to the world in modern language, is Joseph Smith.

During the night of September 21-22, 1823, Joseph Smith received, in answer to fervent prayer, a visitation from a resurrected personage who gave his name as Moroni. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 28.) Subsequent revelations showed Moroni to be the last of a long line of prophets whose translated writings constitute the Book of Mormon.

Moroni stated that at that time the records lay buried in a hill near Joseph Smith's home in Palmyra, New York. He also said that there were two stones in silver bows, and that these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what was the Urim and Thummim, and had been prepared for the purpose of translating the book.

On September 22, 1827, Joseph visited the hill in accord with previous instructions, and there received from the angel Moroni the record (which was engraven on plates having the appearance of gold), and the Urim and Thummim with the breastplate. Joseph proceeded with the translation; and in 1830 the Book of Mormon was first published to the world.

Our best answer to the question—What is the Book of Mormon?—is found on the title page of the volume. Thereon we read:

**THE
BOOK OF MORMON
An Account Written by
THE HAND OF MORMON
UPON PLATES
Taken from the Plates of Nephi**

Wherefore, it is an abridgement of 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—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—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.

This combined title and preface is a translation from the last page of the plates, and was written by Moroni, who, as before stated, sealed and hid up the record in former days.

Three classes of plates are mentioned on this title page:

1. The *Plates of Nephi*, which were of two kinds: (a) the larger plates (which were in the nature of a secular history); (b) the smaller plates (which may be called, in a broad sense, the ecclesiastical history of his people).

2. The *Plates of Mormon*, containing an abridgement from the plates of Nephi, with additions made by Mormon and his son Moroni.

3. The *Plates of Ether*, containing the history of the Jaredites. To these may be added another set of plates, as being mentioned in the Book of Mormon, and in point of time the oldest of all.

4. The *Brass Plates of Laban*, brought by Lehi's (Nephi's father) people from Jerusalem, and containing Jewish scriptures and genealogies, many extracts from which appear in the Nephite records.

Testimonies of the genuineness of the Book of Mormon have been declared by eleven men of honest report, besides the translator, and these men make solemn affirmation as to the appearance of the plates. The translator gives simple and circumstantial account of the bringing forth of the ancient plates and avers that the translation was effected by the power of God; learned linguists pronounce the engraved characters genuine; and the nature of the book itself sustains the claim that it is nothing other than a translation of ancient records.

LESSON PLAN

Article 8—“... we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”

Lesson Aim: To create a general understanding of what the Book of Mormon is and also to show that there are various proofs concerning its reliability.

Suggested Lesson Outline

- I. Reasonable to expect scripture other than the Bible (See *Articles of Faith*, Chapter 16)
- II. Origin of the Book of Mormon
 - A. Joseph Smith's story

Few literary works in any age have made such a stir in the world as the Book of Mormon. This is mostly due to the manner in which the book has reached us. As a religious product it is unique.

Besides, so much depends on an answer to the question, Is the story of its origin true or not? For, on the one hand, if it is not true, then the entire structure of Mormonism is built on a false foundation; and, on the other hand, if it is true, it becomes the strongest physical evidence for the authenticity of Joseph Smith's story and teachings. (A short History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.)

B. History of two nations—Ne-

phites and Jaredites

III. Description and translation

- A. The ancient plates (See Articles of Faith, pp. 262-263)
- B. Arrangement of the book
- C. Translation of plates effected through power of God

IV. Genuineness of the record

- A. Testimony of witness
- B. Testimony of the Spirit (See Moroni 10)
- C. Value of the testimonies

Suggested Method Outline

- I. This chapter makes an ideal subject with which to use the street meeting procedure. The major divisions of the subject might be assigned to different people who would treat the different phases, or the entire talk might be given by one individual who is a fluent speaker. Whoever does the speaking should do little if any reading of material, for this destroys the effectiveness of the meeting.
- II. To more clearly carry out the idea of a street meeting the class leader, before the day of presentation of this lesson, might confer with the ward president and the ward chorister and suggest that the opening hymn be one which is frequently used in street meetings; such as "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," "Redeemer of Israel," "We Thank Thee, O God for a Prophet," or "O Say What Is Truth."
- III. In order to enter into the spirit of the street meeting, it might be explained by the one taking charge that the audience is one

of investigators, and it is assumed by the speaker or speakers that they desire to know more concerning the Book of Mormon. This will set the stage for the street meeting, and it should also be announced that at the close of the demonstration, time will be given to the audience to ask questions on the material expounded.

- IV. The individual giving the talk would probably want to have in her possession a Book of Mormon and any other visual aid which might prove helpful.

- V. After the street meeting demonstration and the questions are all answered, but before the testimony meeting, the ward president might suggest to the class members that they speak on their testimonies of the Book of Mormon and what it has meant in their lives and the lives of their families. Interesting incidents are bound to be related, as many persons have been converted to the Church by reading and studying the Book of Mormon.