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Book of Mormon Studies

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Abstract: This is a series of articles intended for Relief Society course study. It discusses the importance of the Book of Mormon, its coming forth (i.e., the translation, the witnesses, the publication, Joseph Smith), brief overview of its contents, and explains the text from 1 Nephi 1 through Alma 58. Each article features several questions that are helpful in synthesizing and applying the Book of Mormon to daily life.

BOOK OF MORMON STUDIES*

How Came the Book of Mormon: It is scarcely necessary to ask a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints how the Book of Mormon came into being, yet it will be most helpful if every student of these lessons will review carefully the facts which bear on the beginnings of church history. Especially should one review the story of the Prophet's first vision and the events leading directly therefrom to the publishing of the Book of Mormon.

The story has been variously told since the days of the Prophet, but no one has told it with such simplicity and beauty of style as the Prophet himself. Indeed, why should he not speak for himself, since he it was to whom the glorious vision was given!

The Prophet's Story: In the Pearl of Great Price are a few extracts of the history of the Church written in the Prophet's own, direct, inspiring words. After telling of the events that led to his receiving his first vision—all of which should be reviewed—he says:

I continued to pursue my common vocations in life until the twenty-first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three, all the time suffering severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious, because I continued to affirm that I had seen a vision. . . . when, on the evening of the above mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one.

The frankness and directness of the recital of this wonderful experience is evidence to every earnest student that this youthful seeker after truth was indeed inspired of God and entirely truthful in the recital of his wonderful story. Read verses 27-29.†

The Visit of Moroni: The time for ushering in the new dispensation was fully ripe; and the angel Moroni appeared to the Prophet. Note that the vision appeared to him that night three times in succession. How wise that this great recital should have been given to the youth several times so that it might be deeply impressed upon his plastic mind. No vagary or figment of imagination could be thus experienced. Only in the greatest wisdom and according to strict pedagogical practice were these great truths revealed to him. Read verses 30-35, and 42-47.

*Lesson 2 of the Relief Society Course of Study—for use on the second lesson night in January.

†All references in this article refer to the Pearl of Great Price, Writings of Joseph Smith, chapter 2. The same material may be found in the pamphlet, *The Prophet Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story*, which may be secured through the missionaries.

His Father is Told: Had the youthful Prophet but dreamed this glorious experience he would scarcely have been told as he was by the angel to take his father into his confidence.

It is worthy of note that the father and mother, and indeed the whole family of the young man, when told of his marvelous experiences, were the first to believe his story. They continued all through his varied and difficult experiences to sustain him and to give him every aid within their power. This is another convincing argument for the truthfulness of the boy. See verses 48-50.

Training for the Task: Another evidence of divine wisdom is the fact that the young man was not able at once to secure the plates as he desired to do. Instead, four successive visits on the same day a year apart were made by the angel to instruct and prepare him for his great work of translation. Thus with divine guidance did the youth grow to full maturity before he was ready for the heavy task ahead of him. Refer to verses 50-59.

Responsibility for the Sacred Records: That the plates were to be zealously guarded was strictly enjoined upon him. He was also told that while the work of translating was in progress he was entirely responsible for the plates and that no other eye must rest upon them only as the Lord should direct. When his work was done the sacred plates were again to be delivered to the heavenly guardian. Thus was the task well begun. Read verses 60-62.

QUESTIONS

1. Relate the circumstances that led to Joseph Smith's first vision.
2. How was the recital of Joseph Smith's first vision received by the ministers of his acquaintance? Why?
3. How was the Prophet prepared for the work of translation of the sacred record?
4. Why did Moroni appear to Joseph Smith several times? Why were not the plates given to the Prophet at once?
5. Why was the Prophet enjoined to such great pains regarding the care of the record?
6. Why do you believe this simple recital of Joseph Smith?

FROM THE MISSION FIELD

Release and Departure: Elder Theodore N. Hutchings, of the Sheffield, Leeds and Norwich Districts, has been honourably released and sailed for his home in America on January 11th, from Southampton, aboard the *Homeric*.

Transfers: The following missionaries have been transferred from and to the Districts specified: Elder Harold W. England, Newcastle to London; Elder Ivan J. Foster, London to Newcastle; Elder Frank L. Koons, Liverpool to Bristol; Elder Vaughn P. Sheffield, Manchester to Hull.