



Type: Magazine Article

The Book of Mormon Bears Witness of Christ

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Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 88, No. 40 (6 October 1927)

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

Page(s): 625–631

Abstract: In this two-part series, Church members are exhorted to live righteously and to know doctrine and Church history well enough to defend their faith. Ivins testifies that the Redeemer appeared on this continent. The second part concludes the series.

October 6
1927

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS'
MILLENNIAL STAR

ESTABLISHED IN 1840

“But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed.” BOOK OF MORMON, MORMON 4: 5.

No. 40, Vol. 89

Thursday, October 6, 1927

Price One Penny

THE BOOK OF MORMON BEARS WITNESS OF CHRIST

PRESIDENT ANTHONY W. IVINS

(Concluded from page 614)

I CALL ATTENTION to the fact that the Redeemer said to His disciples that He had other sheep who were not of that fold, that they also were to hear His voice. At the time of the crucifixion there were great physical disturbances upon the earth, as we all know. There were at Jerusalem; there were in the Old World; but this record, which was kept by the people to whom it refers, tells that these physical disturbances were greater upon this continent, perhaps, than anywhere else; that there was darkness, that there were earthquakes, that there were thundering and lightning, that many cities were destroyed, and many people lost their lives. After this, the record goes on and tells us:

-And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.

And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

And it came to pass that again they heard the voice, and they understood it not.

And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came.

THE SAVIOUR APPEARED UNTO THE NEPHITES

And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.

And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

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.

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. Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 11:1-14.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ON THE WESTERN CONTINENT

That is the message which this book brings to us. It declares that the Redeemer did appear to these remnants of Israel upon this continent. He taught them as He taught the Jews. He organized His Church among them. He blessed them; He blessed their children; He taught them the doctrine of baptism by immersion, which is in similitude of His death and glorious resurrection; and for four hundred years these people lived in happiness. Then occurred just what exists in the world to-day.

I went to my encyclopedia this morning in an effort to determine the number of Christian denominations that exist in the world, all different in certain details in their creeds, but all recognizing Christ as the Redeemer. Well, I did not get through

them. I had not time before I came to meeting. You all know that they are almost numberless. Similar churches began to spring up, each one claiming to be the proper representative of the Primitive Church. Divisions resulted; war came, just as war has come to the earth in our day, and as it will continue to come until we turn with one heart and one mind to Christ our Lord, and serve Him honestly without guile.

The result was that the great nation to which I have referred was destroyed, divided into tribes and families; and the great civilization which existed was lost to us. In that condition the Spaniards found Mexico and Central America at the time of the conquest.

THE CLOSING WORDS OF MORONI

I have read to you from the title page of the Book of Mormon. I have read to you a few paragraphs relating to the appearance of the Redeemer here, and these are the words with which Moroni closes the record:

And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?

I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.

And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true.

And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. Book of Mormon, Moroni 10: 27-30.

And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen. Book of Mormon, Moroni 10: 33-34.

THE WORDS OF AN HONEST MAN

My brethren and sisters and friends, do these words sound like the words of an imposter? Do they sound like the words of one who desires to lead people away from the redemption wrought out by Christ our Lord, or, do they sound to you like the words of an honest man? The manner in which this book

was brought forth is doubted by some people. They do not believe it; and yet it is true.

Joseph Smith was the author of this book, that is, he translated it and published it to the world. These are the circumstances under which it came to him. He was only a young man, just a boy, but he was prayerful; he was religious, and he tells us that upon a certain night he knelt down and prayed earnestly to the Lord, and this is what occurred :

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.

He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom.

Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me.

A MESSENGER FROM GOD

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni [the last man who wrote upon these plates]; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.

He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants;

Also, that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted “seers” in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book. Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2: 30-35.

My brethren and sisters, that is the simple story which Joseph Smith tells. There is nothing strange about it except that it happened in our time. We know that the Urim and Thummim was had among ancient people. The Bible refers to it and its use very definitely. We know that it was not an unusual thing for people

who had died to appear to the people who were living. We know that Moses and Elias appeared to Christ our Lord, and the members of the Council of the Twelve who accompanied Him. Their appearance was so real that Peter suggested that they build cabins or shelter for them. So I might go on and refer to many, very many such incidents.

These plates were delivered into the hands of Joseph Smith. He translated them. He began the translation of these plates in April, 1829, and in the next year, before a year had elapsed, the book was printed and offered to the world. I want to ask any reasonable man who will read this book if he believes that this young man or anyone associated with him could have written it? Oliver Cowdery was his scribe, and the Prophet never had seen Oliver Cowdery until the day he came to the house of the Prophet's father, and two days following they commenced the work. He had nothing to do with the origin of the book, a book which contains such remarkable things, a book which treats so definitely of doctrine, a book which treats so definitely of history, a book which contains prophecies so definite that any man or woman may know the destiny of this nation of ours if they will only read it. Do you think a boy could publish a book of that kind, which, after the lapse of a hundred years, would be found to be in absolute accord with that which has occurred?

THE WISDOM OF GAMALIEL

You know at one time when the disciples of Christ were arraigned in Jerusalem, there arose a wise man, a thinking man, Gamaliel, and he warned the high priests of the Jews, and in that warning he warned Herod, to let those people alone. "Refrain from these men, and let them alone", he said, "for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

The "Mormon" Church takes exactly that stand. It has never persecuted any other organization, nor any person, because of their religious views. It has never ridiculed any man's religious belief; it has never spread false reports in regard to the tenets or the practices of any other church.

As Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery proceeded with the translation of this book, they found the doctrine of faith; they found the doctrine of repentance; they found the doctrine of baptism, taught in it by this ancient people, and impressed with this they went out into the woods to pray. They asked the Lord in humility, as He has told us to ask, that they might have knowledge in regard to the doctrine of baptism, and they tell us here:

We still continued the work of translation, when, in the ensuing month (May, 1829), we on a certain day went into the woods to pray and

inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates. While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter. . . .

The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John. . . . Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2: 68-70, 72.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

This seems strange to us. We modern people think that it could not happen. Do you think that Joseph Smith had sufficient knowledge of the scriptures, that he was sufficiently wise to have conceived this idea that John the Baptist, the man who was beheaded by Herod in Jerusalem, the man who held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, the man who was the forerunner of Christ our Lord, and administered the ordinance of baptism to Him—had Joseph Smith progressed far enough to know that John the Baptist was the logical person to restore this Priesthood if it were not upon the earth? Not at all; it was as much a surprise to him and Oliver Cowdery as it would be to us if a messenger from heaven should appear here now. But that does not say that it is not true.

We do not ask men to believe this story unless they wish, but we do claim the right to teach it, to bear this message to the world; for it is of great importance to mankind; and we stand upon that doctrine enunciated by Gamaliel. All we ask is to be left in peace, to bring peace to the earth as far as we can, knowing full well that if we are wrong we will be proven to be wrong. Isn't this true?

THE WORK OF THE LORD

If we are right, ridicule, unbelief, lack of faith, will not change that fact. We are living in an age when the Lord is going to act rapidly in the consummation of His purposes; for this is the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. This is the dispensation in which God our Father has said that He would consummate His work, that He would gather together all things in one, that the words of His servants the prophets should be fulfilled, that

Israel should be redeemed and receive their heritage upon this continent, which was sealed upon Ephraim, the youngest son of Joseph, when Joseph's father, Jacob, laid his hands upon Ephraim's head and declared that his heritage would prevail beyond that of his progenitors. His posterity went away from Judea; they went to a land shadowed with wings, to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. Here Ephraim is being gathered, whether he knows it or not.

What is it that has given this nation the preeminent position in the world that it occupies to-day? It is because God our Father has established it. It is because the blood of Israel is in it, and if the blood of Israel will continue faithful the foreign elements which are here seeking its destruction, laying the foundation for changes which will be disastrous, will never become predominant. The Lord is going to look after that. He it is who will take the Jews back to Jerusalem. He it is who will consummate His work, and we stand here waiting for it. We bless all people who have faith in Christ. We believe that God our Father acts upon the minds of men, and that from the time of Luther until to-day, the breaking down of priestcraft has not been by the will of man alone, but because it was the will of God our Father, that liberty might be achieved, that men and women might come to know the Lord through the publication of the Bible, and scattering it throughout the world.

I just read yesterday, in the last issue of the *National Messenger*, the organ of the great British Israel movement which is now assuming such proportions in Great Britain, of a controversy that is on there between a cardinal of the Catholic Church and a representative of the Church of England, in which each is trying to show the other that he is without divine authority.

My brethren and sisters, these are some of the fundamental doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. God bless you all, bless all men and women who seek to magnify the name of our Lord, and who recognize in His Only Begotten Son the Redeemer of the world, I pray, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

GREECE SAID : Be moderate ; know thyself.

Rome said : Be strong ; order thyself.

Confucianism says : Be superior ; correct thyself.

Buddhism says : Be disillusioned ; annihilate thyself.

Hinduism says : Be separated ; merge thyself.

Mohammedanism says : Be submissive ; bend thyself.

Modern Materialism says : Be industrious ; enjoy thyself.

Modern Dilettanteism says : Be broad ; cultivate thyself.

Christianity says : Be Christlike ; give thyself.

E. STANLEY JONES