

DOCTRINE & COVENANTS & CHURCH HISTORY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

* GREEN MOUNTAIN 1ST WARD * LAKEWOOD, COLORADO * 01/25/09 * PAGE 1 *

Lesson 4: “Remember the New Covenant, Even the Book of Mormon”, Joseph Smith—History 1:27-65; D&C 3; 5; 10; 17; 20:5-15; 84:54-62; Our Heritage, pgs. 5-10

Introduction

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Above is the phrase “The Book of Mormon” printed in Japanese, Russian, and Korean. Since its humble beginnings in this dispensation, the Book of Mormon has been a blessing in the lives of millions of people all over the world.

This lesson discusses the miracle of the Book of Mormon and our responsibility to “*flood the earth and [our] lives with the Book of Mormon*” (Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 3; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 4).

Joseph Smith’s preparation to receive and translate the Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith—History 1:27 In the three years after the First Vision, Joseph Smith suffered “severe persecution” but remained true to his testimony.

Consider how we can remain true to our testimonies even when we face persecution.

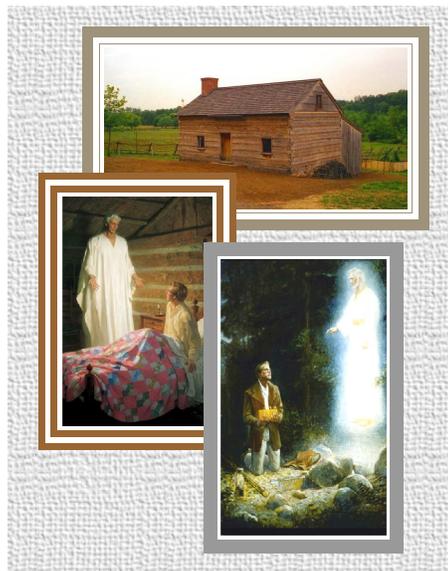
When Joseph was 17 years old, he was visited by Moroni. Moroni was the last prophet to write in the Book of Mormon and had buried the gold plates in about a.d. 421.

Joseph Smith—History 1:28–29 Joseph prayed for forgiveness of his sins and follies, and also for a manifestation of his state and standing before Heavenly Father.

Consider what we can learn from Joseph’s example when we feel “condemned for [our] weakness and imperfections”. When we recognize our weaknesses, we too can seek forgiveness and direction to get ourselves back on track.

Joseph Smith—History 1:30–59 relates the miraculous events surrounding the visit of a heavenly messenger, Moroni, to Joseph.

Joseph Smith—History 1:33–35, 42, 44–46, 53–54. When Joseph was first shown the plates, he was unprepared to receive them, much less proceed to translate the strange writing.



Consider how the Lord prepared Joseph to receive and translate the plates. Ponder how the Lord prepared you (or how is He preparing you now) to fulfill your responsibilities. How can you prepare yourself to fulfill future responsibilities?

Joseph Smith—History 1:50. Joseph’s father responded to his recitation of Moroni’s visitations by saying that “*it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger.*” Consider what this suggests about Joseph’s integrity and trustworthiness.

Lesson Highlights

- Joseph Smith’s preparation to receive and translate the Book of Mormon
- The miracle of the Book of Mormon’s preservation
- Witnesses of the Book of Mormon
- Our duty to “remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon”

A study of this lesson will help us recognize the Lord’s hand in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and to encourage them to study the Book of Mormon, follow its teachings, and share it with others.



The miracle of the Book of Mormon's preservation

Joseph Smith—History 1:60–61. Satan tried to stop the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He tempted men to try to steal the gold plates, and people continued to persecute Joseph Smith and his family. However, the Lord thwarted all of Satan's attempts to keep the Book of Mormon from coming forth.

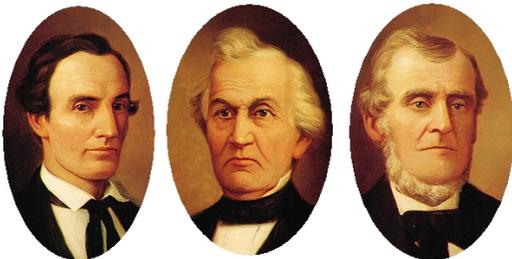
In one notable and familiar example of Satan's efforts to prevent the successful introduction of the Book of Mormon, Martin Harris lost 116 pages of translated manuscript.

- After the pages were lost, the Lord chastened Joseph for fearing his benefactor, Martin Harris, more than God. (**D&C 3:7**)

Witnesses of the Book of Mormon

As Joseph translated the Book of Mormon, he learned that the Lord would permit three witnesses and a few others to view the plates (see the references to these witnesses in 2 Nephi 27:12–14 and Ether 5:1–3).

The Three Witnesses (L-R): Oliver Cowdrey, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris.



D&C 5:11-15, 24-25; 17:3, 5 tell what the witnesses were commanded to do.

Ether 5:4; D&C 5:16-18; and 17:4 explain why their testimony was important.

In addition to the Three Witnesses, eight others were shown the gold plates ("The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," Book of Mormon).

All of the Three Witnesses and three of the Eight Witnesses later left the Church. Only a few returned, but none ever denied his testimony of what he saw.



- In spite of his despair, Joseph was comforted by the Lord as mercy was shown for the mistake. The Lord proved His love for Joseph in **D&C 3:8** as He demonstrated that He would be "*with [Joseph] in every time of trouble*".
- Because the Lord knew that evil men would steal the 116 pages of manuscript, He had prepared an alternative to accomplish His purposes and defeat the evil plan. **D&C 10:38-39** and **1 Nephi 9:2-5** explain.
- **D&C 3:16, 19–20** and **D&C 10:46–52, 60–66** teach about the purposes of the Book of Mormon. How are these purposes being fulfilled today?

In the last year of his life, David Whitmer published this testimony in response to false accusations:

"It is recorded in the American Encyclopaedia and the Encyclopaedia Britannica, that I, David Whitmer, have denied my testimony as one of the three witnesses to the divinity of the Book of Mormon, and that the other two witnesses, Oliver Cowdrey and Martin Harris, denied their testimony to that book. I will say once more to all mankind, that I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof. I also testify to the world, that neither Oliver Cowdrey nor Martin Harris ever at any time denied their testimony. They both died reaffirming the truth of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon" (Address to All Believers in Christ [1887], 8; as quoted in B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church, 1:145).

D&C 17:6; D&C 19:26. The Savior is also a witness of the Book of Mormon.

Consider how we can be witnesses of the Book of Mormon. (See Moroni 10:3–5)

The Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses testified of things that they saw and heard. Today millions of members of the Church testify of the Book of Mormon because they feel the witness of the Holy Ghost.

Gordon B. Hinckley said: "*The strength of the Church is not in ... its thousands of houses of worship across the world, nor in its universities. ... The strength of this church lies in the hearts of its people, in the individual testimony and conviction of the truth of this work*" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 73–74; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 49).

Knowing that the Lord prepared for the mistake of Joseph Smith 1000 years before it happened should give those among us who are not yet perfect comfort. The Lord will have prepared for our mistakes as well, and will, when we are ready, "make a way to escape." (1 Cor. 10:13)



Our duty to “remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon”

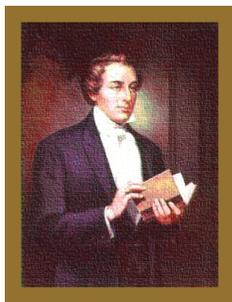
D&C 84:54-56. In September 1832 the Prophet Joseph received a revelation in which the Lord said that “*the whole church [was] under condemnation*”. “*Because of unbelief, and because [they had] treated lightly the things [they had] received.*”

D&C 84:57-58, 60-62. To lift the condemnation the members must “*repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written.*”

President Ezra Taft Benson: “*If the early Saints were rebuked for treating the Book of Mormon lightly, are we under any less condemnation if we do the same?*” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 4-5).

“*The Lord is not pleased with us in the manner of attention we’re giving the Book of Mormon, a new witness for Christ. We need it in our homes, we need it in our families. It was written for us today*” (*Church News*, 9 Nov. 1986, 10).

Consider how you can give more attention to the Book of Mormon in your personal life, in your family, and in your Church assignments. What blessings have come to you when you gave proper attention to the Book of Mormon? How have you been blessed through your study of the Book of Mormon?



Conclusion

President Benson: “*The Book of Mormon must be re-enthroned in the minds and hearts of our people. We must honor it by reading it, by studying it, by taking its precepts into our lives and transforming them into lives required of the true followers of Christ. President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “It seems to me that any member of this Church would never be satisfied until he or she had read the Book of Mormon time and time again, and thoroughly considered it so that he or she could bear witness that it is in very deed a record with the inspiration of the Almighty upon it, and that its history is true. No member of this Church can stand approved in the presence of God who has not seriously and carefully read the Book of Mormon.”* (In Conference Report, October 1961, p. 18.) (CR October 1986, *Ensign* 16 [November 1986]: 80.)

President Ezra Taft Benson declared: “*There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called ‘the words of life’ (D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance. ... [You will also enjoy] increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, [and] increased spirituality and righteousness.*”

“*These promises are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God*” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

D&C 84:62. The Savior has commanded us to bear testimony of the Book of Mormon across the earth. What can you do to further this effort?

President Benson said: “*The time is long overdue for a massive flooding of the earth with the Book of Mormon. ... In this age of the electronic media and the mass distribution of the printed word, God will hold us accountable if we do not now move the Book of Mormon in a monumental way. We have the Book of Mormon, we have the members, we have the missionaries, we have the resources, and the world has the need. The time is now!*” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 4-5).

The Book of Mormon, translated by a young prophet in humble circumstances, is now indeed flooding the earth. The Book of Mormon or selections from it have been published in more than 90 languages. More than 100 million copies have been printed.

“*May we keep the new covenant by remembering the Book of Mormon. And may we treasure the eternal truths revealed by the Book of Mormon that bear testimony of the Only Begotten of the Father, even Jesus Christ our Savior (Moses 7:62).*”

Taylor D. Halverson

<http://www.meridianmagazine.com/gospeldoctrine/dc/050111dc5.html>

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How can you better support family members and others as they follow the Lord?
- How have you been blessed through your study of the Book of Mormon?

