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HOW THE BOOK OF MORMON IS THE KEYSTONE OF OUR RELIGION

It is impossible to overstate the role that the Book of Mormon has played from the beginning of this dispensation—and the role it will continue to play.

Joseph Smith said once “that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man [or woman] would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”¹

“The Prophet Joseph’s expression that the Book of Mormon is ‘the keystone of our religion’ is a profound and crucial observation. A keystone is positioned at the uppermost center of an arch in such a way as to hold all the other stones in place. That key piece, if removed, will bring all of the other blocks crashing down with it. The truthfulness of the Book of Mormon—its origins, its doctrines, and the circumstances of its coming forth—is central to the truthfulness of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”²

It is impossible to overstate the role that the Book of Mormon has played from the beginning of this dispensation—and the role it will continue to play as the basic declaration of the truthfulness of the gospel as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Let me share with you three reasons why the Book of Mormon is “the keystone of our religion.”



The keystone is the center stone that holds an arch together. If the keystone is removed, the whole arch will collapse.



THE KEYSTONE OF THE RESTORATION

“Everything of saving significance in the Church stands or falls on the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and, by implication, the Prophet Joseph Smith’s account of how it came forth. . . . Either the Book of Mormon is what the Prophet Joseph said it is, or this church and its founder are false, a deception from the first instance onward.”³

The Book of Mormon is “the keystone of the restoration” because everything we teach has its roots in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s first experiences in the Sacred Grove and the Hill Cumorah. Everything that we have flows one way or another out of his original testimony.

THE KEYSTONE OF OUR DOCTRINE

We have wonderful doctrine in the Bible, but the Book of Mormon plays a role in establishing doctrine, teaching doctrine, expanding doctrine and underscoring doctrine that is not available anywhere in either the Old or the New Testament.

Regarding the Atonement, the teachings of Nephi, Jacob, and their father, Lehi, as well as King Benjamin, Alma and Amulek, and many others exceed anything in the Bible on that subject. I love the Bible, but it is the Book of Mormon that is truly majestic regarding the Savior’s Atonement.

Consider also the scattering and the gathering of Israel, faith, baptism, and the resurrection. The Book of Mormon is the keystone of our doctrine because it gives us so much that had been lost from the Bible about these fundamental doctrines.

THE KEystone OF OUR TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

If you were to ask someone, “Who is the main character in the Book of Mormon?” they might be confused. The Book of Mormon contains a thousand years of history for the Nephites as well as the history of the Jaredites. It is unlikely that one figure will come to the forefront over such a long period of time. They may say, “Well, perhaps it’s Nephi, or maybe it’s Alma, or maybe it’s Mormon, or perhaps Moroni.” It isn’t any of those.

The principal character in the book is Jesus Christ. From the first page to the last, it was intended to be so. That’s what the title page says. That’s what the book was designed to be—a declaration that “Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God” (title page of the Book of Mormon). Christ is everything in this book.

A SPECIAL MESSAGE

At the end of the Book of Mormon, when Moroni is alone, weary, and heartbroken, he still wrote of faith, hope, and charity. Moroni said, “I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world. . . . And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity” (Ether 12:33–34; see also Moroni 7:38–48). That definition of charity is at the heart of the Atonement of Christ. Jesus Christ loves us perfectly, and His love lasts forever. That’s why we can say that real charity, His charity, never faileth (see Moroni 7:46).

Life has its share of fears and failures. Sometimes things fall short. Sometimes

people fail us, economies fail us, businesses or governments fail us. But the message of the Book of Mormon is that the one thing in time and eternity that will not fail us is the pure love of the Lord Jesus Christ as manifest in His Atoning sacrifice. He never fails us.

The message of the Book of Mormon is that Christ does not fail us. His salvation will not fail, His ordinances will not fail, His Church will not fail. This is the dispensation of the fullness of times. The restored gospel will never be taken from the face of the earth again. That is the message of the Book of Mormon.

As a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bear witness of the Book of Mormon that led me to Him. I found the Lord Jesus Christ within the covers of the Book of Mormon as a 19-year-old missionary, walking through the rain and the mud of England, riding a bike with mud clear up the back of my coat and over the top of my head, tracting in cities that had never been opened, with baptisms that did not come for a long time. Those nights I went back to No. 3 Gilmore Road and read and read and wept. I knew that Jesus was the Christ, that the Book of Mormon was true, that the gospel had been restored. If the folks in England didn’t understand that, then I would just keep knocking on their doors until they did.

I know the role the Book of Mormon has played in the message of the Restoration. I understand how urgent it was for heaven to get it into the Prophet Joseph’s hands. I understand what it will yet mean in preparing the way for Christ to come, to rule and reign as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. It is a witness,

it is a declaration from cover to cover, from title page to final verse, that Jesus is the Christ and that the gospel has been restored. **NE**

From an address given at a seminar for new mission presidents on June 26, 1997.

EVERYTHING
OF SAVING
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NOTES

1. Introduction to the Book of Mormon; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 64.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, (1997), 344–45.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 345.