**The Story of the Church of Christ**

**X. The Book of Mormon**

In June 1829 eleven additional witnesses of the source of the plates on which the Book of Mormon was written were provided. Joseph Smith, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris prayed together in a forest area to be given a witness regarding the plates. First Joseph, David, and Oliver were shown the plates by an angel. Afterward Joseph and Martin Harris, who had gone apart to pray, were shown the plates by an angel. Two or three days later, Joseph showed the plates to eight others---Joseph’s father, Joseph, Senior, his two brothers, Hyrum and Samuel, David Whitmer’s four brothers, Christian, Jacob, Peter, Jr., and John, and David’s brother-in-law, Hyrum Page. The written testimonies of all eleven of these men were affirmed throughout their lives. Joseph, too, always remained true and constant in his belief in the truthfulness of the restored gospel.

In support of the Book of Mormon there is a significant statement in Ezekiel 37:15, 16, 17. “The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companion: then take another stick and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick: and they shall become one in they hand.”

In olden days books were very different from the ones we have today. A book was a parchment (animal skin) fastened to two sticks so it could be rolled and unrolled as it was read. The stick of Judah Ezekiel speaks of was the **Bible** and the stick of Joseph was the records we know as the **Book of Mormon.** Those two records are in perfect agreement, and so become one in putting down al false doctrines.

In the Old Testament there are many special promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). Even greater promises were made to Jacob’s son Joseph. He was promised a choice land, the description of which can only be America. It is describes as “a land shadowing with wings.” A map of the Americas looks like two giant wings. In this land Joseph’s descendants would become a great people.

When we read the Book of Mormon we find in part of it the story of a family descended from Manasseh, Joseph’s son. This family was warned to leave Jerusalem just before the people there were taken captive and carried

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away into Babylon. This was 600 BC when Zedekiah was king. The members of the family were Lehi and his wife, their four sons and their wives, a man named Ishmael whose daughters were the wives of Lehi’s sons, and a servant names Zoram. Lehi had tried to warn the people in Jerusalem about the trouble that was coming, but they refused to listen and mistreated him even as many other prophets had been mistreated. God directed Lehi’s group to build a ship, and then God brought them safely to the land that had been promised to their ancestor Joseph.

The Book of Mormon gives the history of another group of people who had come to America much earlier than Lehi. These earlier people came at the time the people had tried unsuccessfully to build the tower of Babel. As punishment God had scattered them over all the earth, including America. Lehi’s family came to be called Nephites and Lamanites after two of Lehi’s sons. They found a record of this earlier group whose history is in the Book of Ether in the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon contains fifteen books which cover a period of time from 600 B.C. to 400 A.D. ----- a thousand years. In addition it tells about the 2200 years B.C. when the earlier people came from the tower of Babel.

The most important part of the Book of Mormon is the visit of Christ to America after His resurrection and ascension. There had been prophesies of the birth and death of Christ, so the people in the Americas had some knowledge of Christ even before His visit. Jesus told them how he had been slain for the sins of the world. He called twelve disciples and gave them power to baptize---even the words they should use. In the Church of Christ today those same words are used during baptism. He taught them the same blessed gospel He had taught during His lifetime here on earth. He told them He had fulfilled the law of Moses, and they should keep the commandments He had just given them. He told the people to make a record of the things He had told them. He also gave them instructions about the sacrament. Those who had been baptized He indicated were the people of His church. After teaching them His Gospel, Jesus departed.