

G D Lesson 4: “Remember the New Covenant, Even the Book of Mormon”

(Joseph Smith—History 1:27–65; Doctrine and Covenants 3; 5; 10; 17; 20:5–15; 84:54–62)

LESSON GOAL: To help us recognize the Lord’s hand in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and to encourage us to study the Book of Mormon, follow its teachings, and share it with others.

How the Lord guided the unfolding of the Book of Mormon:

D&C 3: July 1828-----Apr. 12-June 14, 1828, Martin Harris, 45, translated the Book of Mormon with Joseph Smith and lost the 116 pages.

D&C 5: March 1829-----Harris comes back to Joseph to see the plates again to increase his own prestige, revealing that the Lord knows our desires and motives and wants purity of heart. The Lord confirms He has called Joseph Smith as a prophet.

D&C 10: Summer 1828-----The Lord has prepared a way to frustrate the evil ones who took the 116 pages. Joseph would begin a translation of the smaller plates of Nephi.

D&C 17: June 1829-----Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris inquire of the Lord if they can be three witnesses to the golden plates and the Book of Mormon.

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

Ted Gibbons: “Seven years passed from the time of the First Vision until Joseph received the golden plates. . . . Joseph was certainly willing to do the work. He had been called. **What was needed was commitment and determination. Joseph needed to know that he could do what he was required to do, regardless of the personal hazards or sacrifice involved. He had to show himself—not just declare—himself trustworthy.** That is probably what required seven years of preparation” (D&C Church History Lesson #4, 2)

Randall S. Chase: “When Joseph Smith was first shown the gold plates at the tender age of 17, **he was not yet prepared to receive and translate them.** But the Lord prepared Joseph to receive and translate the plates over the next four years. There were a number of things that Joseph had to learn before he could receive the plates:

- The need to be **strictly obedient** to the Lord's commandments
- The **sacredness** of the ancient record
- The **power of Satan**, who would attempt to destroy both Joseph and the record
- The **future destiny of the work** to which Joseph had been called” (*Meridian Magazine*, Jan. 2012, 3).

Richard R. Bennett: “If Joseph Smith was called to be a prophet, then God assumed the responsibility of teaching and training him in that role. The pages of both Church history and holy writ show how Joseph Smith was carefully and thoroughly taught the first principles of the gospel, specifically repentance, during that formative foundational decade of the 1820s . . . Before the mission of translating the Book of Mormon could begin, the message of forgiveness first had to be communicated. **Thus, if faith in God opened the heavens the first time, repentance opened them the second time**” (*Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer*, ed. Richard N. Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson. 2010).

H. Donl Peterson: “Moroni is a remarkable man—a mighty prophet and a great heavenly messenger. He was the first of at least fifty-seven immortal personages who appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, or who were seen by him in vision. Moroni alone appeared at least twenty-two times to that “unlearned” man. **Being taught like that—from on high—is the ultimate education. Joseph Smith, one of the greatest prophets the world has ever known was taught by another of the greatest prophets the world has ever known. And all of us, as a consequence, are blessed**” (Griggs and Cheesman, *Scriptures for the Modern World*, 1992).

MORONI’S INSTRUCTIONS TO JOSEPH SMITH

1. **Apostasy and scattering**

Deut. 32:23-24: I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. *They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction.*

Isaiah 1:7: Your country *is* desolate, your cities *are* burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and *it is* desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

Isaiah 1:23-24: Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of **thieves**: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards. Therefore, saith the Lord of hosts, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

Isaiah 29:13: ¶Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but **have removed their heart** far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

2. **The calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith**

Malachi 3:1: Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 11:1-2: And there shall come forth **a rod out of the stem of Jesse**, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD

Isaiah 11:10-12: ¶And in that day there shall be **a root of Jesse**, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people,

3. **The opening of the heavens during the Restoration**

Joel 2:28-29: ¶And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* **I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh**; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

4. **The coming forth of the Book of Mormon**

Isaiah 29:11, 14: And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of **a book that is sealed**, which *men* deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed . . . Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do **a marvelous work among this people**, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder:

5. **The restoration of the priesthood and of the sealing keys**

Malachi 4:5-6: ¶Behold, **I will send you Elijah the prophet** before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

6. **The gathering of the elect**

Isaiah 11:12, 16: And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and **gather together the dispersed of Judah** from the four corners of the earth. . . And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

Jeremiah 31:8-9: Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and **gather them from the coasts of the earth**, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

7. **Destruction and purification prior to and during the Second Coming**

Malachi 3:2-3: But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? **for he is like a refiner's fire**, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

Malachi 4:1, 3: For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and **all that do wickedly, shall be stubble** . . . And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts.

Acts 3:22-23: For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. **And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.**

Joel 2:30-31: And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The **sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood**, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

8. **Deliverance for the faithful**

Joel 2:32: And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call
Malachi 4:2: ¶But **unto you that fear my name** shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

9. **The Second Coming**

Malachi 3:1: Behold, **I will send my messenger**, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

10. **The premillennial and millennial state of the faithful**

Malachi 3:3-4: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **he shall purify the sons of Levi**, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

Isaiah 11: 4-5, 9: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for **the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD**, as the waters cover the sea.

Plus: (Visit #2): Great judgments which were coming upon the earth
Plus: (Visit #3): No motive for money!

Plus: (Visit #4): Tell your father!
Plus: (Visit #5): Power of evil vs. the glory of God

TIMELINE 1823-27

21–22 Sept. 1823...Moroni appears to Joseph Smith Oct. 1825...Joseph works for Josiah Stowell; met Emma Hale
1824–27.....Joseph's annual visits to Cumora 18 Jan. 1827...Marriage: Joseph Smith and Emma Hale
19 Nov. 1823.....Alvin Smith dies 22 Sept. 1827...Joseph entrusted with the plates

Lucy Mack Smith: "The angel had informed Joseph that he might make an effort to obtain the plates on the twenty-second of the ensuing September [1824]. Accordingly, when the time arrived he visited the place where the plates were hid; and supposing at this time that the only thing required, in order to possess them until the time for their translation, was to be able to keep the commandments of God-and he firmly believed he could keep every commandment which had been given him-he fully expected to carry them home with him.

"Having arrived at the place appointed, he removed the moss and grass from the surface of the rock, and then pried up the flat stone, according to the directions which he had received. He then discovered the plates lying on four pillars in the inside of the box. He put forth his hand and took them up, but when he lifted them from their place, the thought flashed across his mind that there might be something more in the box that would be of a pecuniary [monetary] benefit to him. In the excitement of the moment, he laid the record down in order to cover up the box, lest someone should come along and take away whatever else might be deposited there."

"When he turned again to take up the record, it was gone, but where he knew not, nor did he know by what means it had been taken away. He was much alarmed at this. He knelt down and asked the Lord why it was that the record was taken from him. The angel appeared to him and told him that he had not done as he was commanded, for in a former revelation he had been commanded not to lay the plates down, or put them for a moment out of his hands, until he got into the house and deposited them in a chest or trunk having a good lock and key; and contrary to this, he had laid them down with the view of securing some fancied or imaginary treasure that remained."

"In the moment of excitement, Joseph was overcome by the powers of darkness and forgot the injunction that was laid upon him. After some further conversation, Joseph was permitted to raise the stone again, and there he beheld the plates, the same as before. He reached forth his hand to take them, but was hurled to the ground with great violence. When he recovered, the angel was gone, and he arose and returned to the house, weeping for grief and disappointment." (Lucy Mack Smith, *Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith By His Mother*, Scot & Maurine Proctor).

2. The miracle of the Book of Mormon's preservation

When Martin Harris lost the 116 pages, the Lord knew what was going to happen. He prepared for Joseph's mistake a thousand years before it happened, by inspiring the young prophet Nephi to make two records, covering the same period of time. In a passage that seems to refer to Joseph Smith, Jesus declared:

3 Nephi 21:10: But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for **I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil**"

...and the final phase of the verse above was quoted again by the Lord as he dealt with the loss of the 116 pages. Speaking to those who stole the record, the Lord said, "**I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil**" (D&C 10:43)

D&C 3:1-4: "The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught. For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round. Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men. For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him.

Mother Smith's account of the lost manuscript: "When Joseph had taken a little nourishment, , he requested us to send immediately for Mr. Harris. This we did without delay. At eight o'clock we set the victuals on the table, as we were expecting him every moment. We waited till nine, and he came not. But at half past twelve we saw him walking with a slow and measured tread towards the house, his eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the ground. On coming to the gate, he stopped, instead of passing through, and got upon the fence, and sat there some time with his hat drawn over his eyes. At length he entered the house. Soon after which we sat down to the table, Mr. Harris with the rest. He took up his knife and fork as if he were going to use them, but immediately dropped them. Hyrum, observing this, said 'Martin, why do you not eat; are you sick?' Upon which Mr. Harris pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out in a tone of deep anguish, 'Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!'

"Joseph who had not expressed his fears till now, sprang from the table, exclaiming, 'Martin, have you lost that manuscript? Have you broken your oath, and brought down condemnation upon my head as well as your own?'

"'Yes; it is gone,' replied Martin, 'and I know not where.'

"Oh, my God!" said Joseph, clinching his hands. "All is lost! all is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned--it is I who tempted the wrath of God. I should have been satisfied with the first answer which I received from the Lord; for he told me that it was not safe to let the writing go out of my possession." He wept and groaned, and walked the floor continually.

"At length he told Martin to go back and search again.

"No"; said Martin, "it is all in vain; for I have ripped open beds and pillows; and I know it is not there."

"Then must I," said Joseph, "return with such a tale as this? I dare not do it. And how shall I appear before the Lord? Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?"

"I besought him not to mourn so, for perhaps the Lord would forgive him. However, Joseph was more distressed than the rest, as he better understood the consequences of disobedience. And he continued pacing back and forth, meantime weeping and grieving, until about sunset, when, by persuasion, he took a little nourishment.

"The next morning, he set out for home. We parted with heavy hearts, for it now appeared that all which we had so fondly anticipated, and which had been the source of so much secret gratification, had in a moment fled, and fled forever." (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 127-129).

Jeffrey R. Holland: At least six times in the Book of Mormon, the phrase "**for a wise purpose**" is used in reference to the making, writing, and preserving of the small plates of Nephi (1 Ne. 9:5; W of M 1:7; Alma 37:2, 12, 14, 18). One such wise purpose was **to compensate for the future loss of 116 pages** of manuscript translated from the first part of the Book of Mormon. . . In D&C 10:45, the Lord says, "Behold, there are many things engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi which do throw *greater views* upon my gospel." **We got back more than we lost.** We do not know exactly what we have missed in the lost 116 pages, but we do know that what we received on the small plates was the personal declarations of three great witnesses (Nephi, Jacob, and Isaiah), three of the great doctrinal voices of the Book of Mormon, testifying that Jesus is the Christ. ("For a Wise Purpose," *Ensign*, Jan. 1996, 13-14)

How long were the Prophet's privileges revoked? It had been about a month since Martin had lost the manuscript and the Urim and Thummim had been taken from Joseph. Even though the Lord tells Joseph that he is called to the work. He would not receive the Urim and Thummim for the work of translation until September 22, 1828, exactly one year from date he received the plates from Moroni. **The summer of 1828 must have been the darkest period in the Prophet's life, rivaling or even exceeding the darkest days of Liberty Jail.**

Even after September, the work progressed very slowly, with Emma acting as scribe, until the arrival of Oliver Cowdery in Apr. 1829. **Therefore, the loss of the 116 pages resulted in an almost 1-year delay in the process of translation. Consider the following timeline:**

- **12 Apr. 1828:** Joseph Smith commences translation of the Book of Mormon with Martin Harris as scribe, Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania.
- **14 June 1828:** Martin Harris leaves Harmony with 116 translated pages of the Book of Lehi. The pages are stolen in Palmyra Township, June-July 1828.
- **15 June 1828:** First son, Alvin, born; dies within hours, Harmony.
- **July 1828:** Joseph's first known recording of a revelation immediately after receiving it (D&C 3).
- **July 1828:** Interpreters and plates are taken from the Prophet by angel Moroni.
- **22 Sept. 1828:** Interpreters and plates returned to the Prophet by angel Moroni, Harmony.
- **5 Apr. 1829:** Oliver Cowdery arrives at Harmony from New York; translation recommences on 7 Apr. 1829.
- **June 1829:** Finishes Book of Mormon translation at Fayette, Seneca County, New York." ("Highlights in the Prophet's Life," *Ensign*, June 1994, 24, 26)

TRANSLATING THE PLATES

Even after almost 10 years of preparation, Joseph Smith relearned the lesson that even the smallest sins or senseless hurts prevented the free flow of inspiration and revelation.

David Whitmer: "One morning when he [Joseph Smith] was getting ready to continue the translation, something went wrong about the house and he was put out about it. **Something that Emma, his wife, had done.** Oliver and I went upstairs and Joseph came up soon after to continue the translation, but he could not do anything. **He could not translate a single syllable.** He went down stairs, out into the orchard, and made supplication to the Lord; was gone about an hour--came back to the house, **asked Emma's forgiveness** and then came up stairs where we were and then the translation went on all right. **He could do nothing save he was humble and faithful**" ("Address to All Believers in Christ", March 19, 1881).

During the translation process, the witnesses were able to observe, in an open setting, the following:

- Joseph Smith placing the interpreters (Urim and Thummim or the seer stone) in a hat, placing his face into the hat;
- Joseph dictating for long time periods without reference to any books, papers, manuscripts, or even the plates;
- Joseph spelling out unfamiliar Book of Mormon names; after each dictated sequence, the scribe reading back to Joseph what was written so that Joseph could check the correctness of the manuscript;
- Joseph starting a dictation session without prompting from the scribe about where the previous session had ended.

On the basis of the witnesses' statements, we can identify the following stages in the translation process:

1. Joseph Smith sees (in some way) the English text;
2. Joseph reads off the text to the scribe;
3. the scribe hears the text; the scribe writes the text;
4. the scribe reads back the text to Joseph to check for errors.

(*How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript* by Royal Skousen, 22-31).

3. Witnesses of the Book of Mormon

Nancy Jensen Blog:

"Martin Harris's folly is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants for all of us to witness. But we would do very well to be half as valiant as Martin Harris. **Here are some ways in which he was a great example:**

- He **mortgaged his farm** for the publication of the Book of Mormon.
- Despite the fact that the Lord had commanded him to mortgage the farm, when the mortgage fell due, the Church had no money to pay it back and he had to give it up to **foreclosure**
- At about the same time, he endured the **pain of divorce**, rather unusual for his day.
- He served a mission with his brother Emer and **baptized at least 182 people**.
- While serving his mission he was **imprisoned** on a false charge.
- After his mission, he **volunteered** to march on the dangerous rescue mission with Zion's Camp
- He was called **to help choose** the Quorum of the 12 Apostles.
- He was a **member of the first high council** in Kirtland.

Later in his life, he departed from activity in the Church due to some disagreement. But even then, as he remained behind in Kirtland, he became the **self-appointed caretaker and protector of the Kirtland Temple**, which had been left behind by the saints. Without Martin, it is doubtful that building would still be standing in its beauty as it is today.

Oliver Cowdery, the second of the Three Witnesses, enters the story. While Joseph was in Pennsylvania, Oliver Cowdery, who was just a year younger than he, took up boarding with Joseph's parents back in New York. He was the school teacher, and part of the school teacher's pay from the community he served was his room and board with one of them. **After hearing about Joseph's vision, he wanted to meet him himself.** At the same time, Joseph was praying for help in translating. He had his wife and his brother-in-law writing for him, but they were both so busy that they couldn't do it full-time. Oliver Cowdery showed up, and two days later, April 7, 1829, **he and Joseph began to translate full-time.** The translation was finished June 30th or July 1st. The speed with which they translated was incredible: the entire Book of Mormon in less than three months. Oliver's normally perfect handwriting was uncharacteristically sloppy because of the speed at which he was writing. (*Latter-day History*, 41).

The third witness, **David Whitmer**, was an acquaintance of Oliver Cowdery's. Before Oliver went to Pennsylvania, they had discussed the rumors about the Smith family and the golden plates. Oliver had told David that he was going to find out whether the rumors were true and he would let him know. Shortly after his arrival in Pennsylvania, he wrote to David, telling him he was convinced that Joseph actually had the plates and that he was to be the scribe in the translation. Then he wrote another letter, including a few lines translated from the plates and bore his testimony of its authenticity as an ancient record. **Finally, Oliver wrote a letter asking--no, telling--David Whitmer that God had commanded him to come to Pennsylvania** and bring Joseph and Oliver back to his own family's house (he was still living with his parents). The reason for this was that persecution was now great in Pennsylvania.

David Whitmer didn't know what to do. He had 20 acres to plow, which would not wait. So he decided he had better do his plowing before he left. He got up to do the work and found **that 5 to 7 acres had been plowed** in the night. He said, "I do not know who did it, but it was done just as I would have done myself, and the plow was left standing in the furrow."

The next morning he went out to spread plaster on his fields, a common soil treatment of the day. He had left the plaster in heaps near the house, but now it was gone. He ran to his sister and asked what had happened to it. She was surprised and asked if it wasn't all sown yesterday. "'Not to my knowledge,' answered David. I accordingly went, and **saw three men at work in the field**, supposing that you had hired some help, on account of your hurry, I went immediately into the house, and gave the subject no further attention" (Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 136-37).

On June 20, 1829, as the translation was progressing, Joseph came across a scripture that told him **there were to be three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.**

Ether 5:2-3: And behold, ye may be privileged that ye may show the plates unto those who shall assist to bring forth this work; **And unto three shall they be shown by the power of God;** wherefore they shall know of a surety that these things are true.

2 Nephi 27:12: Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that **the eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it,** by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.

When Joseph read this, **Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer asked if they might be the three, and the Lord said yes.**

D&C 17:2-3: And it is **by your faith that you shall obtain a view of them [the plates]**, even by that faith which was had by the prophets of old. And after that you have obtained faith, and have seen them with your eyes, **you shall testify of them, by the power of God;**

After sincere prayer in the woods with the Prophet Joseph, David and Oliver saw an angel. "In his hands he held the plates...He turned over the leaves one by one. and we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, 'These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.'" Shortly afterwards, Joseph and Martin prayed fervently together and beheld the vision. When they returned to the house it was about 3:00 in the afternoon. Joseph threw himself down by his mother and said, "**Father, mother, you do not know how happy I am: the Lord has now caused the plates to be shown to three more besides myself. They have seen an angel, who has testified to them, and they will have to bear witness to the truth of what I have said, for now they know for themselves, that I do not go about to deceive the people, and I feel as if I was relieved of a burden which was almost too heavy for me to bear, and it rejoices my soul, that I am not any longer to be entirely alone in the world.**" (*Latter-day History*, 42, 44).

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

The Lord told the church that they were under condemnation for their neglect of the Book of Mormon. The condemnation was for two reasons: 1) the saints had neglected to **share** the book, and 2), they had neglected to **use** the book.

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

President Benson: “Excluding the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, the **Doctrine and Covenants is by far the greatest external witness and evidence which we have from the Lord that the Book of Mormon is true**” (*Ensign*, May 1987, 83).

Jeffrey R. Holland: “Can we, like these early Saints, also be accused of taking this book lightly? Some of us treat it as if it were just another book—let it gather a little dust, or use it to press the rose from Mary Jane's wedding, or do almost anything with it but read it. I believe **we will be indicted for the darkness we incur** and that we will owe penitence in this life or the next for that which we fail to learn, **especially that which we fail to learn from the Book of Mormon.** **President Joseph Fielding Smith** taught that “no member of this church can stand approved in the presence of God who has not **seriously and carefully read the Book of Mormon**” (*However Long and Hard the Road*, 57).

Gerald N. Lund: "Now consider Joseph Smith's accomplishments in bringing forth scripture:

Book of Mormon	531 pages
Doctrine and Covenants 1-134	280 pages
Pearl of Great Price	58 pages
Joseph Smith Translation	30 pages

What really matters is the content of the new scriptures that he gave to the world. Joseph Smith gave us new or expanded knowledge about a full spectrum of gospel topics:

- The nature of the Godhead
- The role and functions of the Holy Ghost
- The nature of intelligences
- The premortal existence
- The Council in Heaven
- Jesus Christ's and Lucifer's premortal roles
- The Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement
- Priesthood keys, organization, and ordinances
- The laws of consecration and stewardship
- The temple endowment and temple sealings
- Work for the dead
- Spirit paradise and spirit prison
- The Second Coming of Jesus Christ
- The three degrees of glory and outer darkness

As the Lord Jesus Christ said, '**This generation shall have my word through you [the Prophet Joseph Smith]**' (D&C 5:10). Joseph Smith said, 'I never told you I was perfect,' 'but **there is no error in the revelations which I have taught**' (*History of the Church*, 6:366)" ("A Prophet for the Fulness of Times," *Ensign*, Jan. 1997, 52-53).

Bruce R. McConkie: “One of the most solemn oaths ever given to man is found in these words of the Lord relative to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. **“He [Joseph Smith] has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him,” saith the Lord, “and as your Lord and your God liveth, it is true”** (D&C 17:6). This is God's testimony of the Book of Mormon. In it, Deity himself has laid his godhood on the line. **Either the book is true or God ceases to be God. There neither is nor can be any more formal or powerful language known to men or gods”** (“The Doctrine of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 33).