

Excerpt from

The Book of Mormon: Strengthening Our Faith in Jesus Christ

By Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Important for Our Day

Why would another testament of Jesus Christ be so important for our day? Why would the Lord bring forth another witness to strengthen the powerful declarations of the Bible?

We live in a time unlike any other. Scientific achievement allows medical care, transportation, comfort, and convenience never imagined by generations who preceded us. The earth is flooded with information and technology, enhancing family history work and the sharing of the gospel but also the proliferation of pornography, virtual violence, and other “evils and designs [that] exist in the hearts of conspiring men” (D&C 89:4). In much of the world, we live in a time of strong attachment to material possessions.

These conditions can, if we are not careful, distract or entice us to move away from principles that are eternal and true for every generation.

When I was a young missionary in Europe in the early 1970s, we began much of our teaching with an explanation of the Apostasy, because the divinity of Jesus Christ was widely accepted. When I returned as a mission president 20 years later, we began our conversations differently, because belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who gave His life for our sins and rose the third day, had faded significantly.

In today’s world, the arrogant arguments of Korihor, the anti-Christ, find listening ears:

“Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come.

“Behold, these things which ye call prophecies … are foolish traditions of your fathers.

“… Ye cannot know of things which ye do not see. …

“… Every man prosper[s] according to his [own] genius, and … conquer[s] according to his [own] strength” (Alma 30:13–15, 17).

We need our own secure and settled faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we need help in strengthening our families so that this faith flows into the hearts of our children and grandchildren. Faith in Jesus Christ, when solidly anchored in our souls, brings true conversion, and in its wake come repentance, honest discipleship, miracles, spiritual gifts, and enduring righteousness. This is an important part of the divine mission of the Book of Mormon.

As a young missionary, I had a most interesting discussion with a clergyman. He told us that he could not accept the Book of Mormon because it openly spoke of Jesus Christ, using His name and events of His life hundreds of years before His birth. He found this transparency uncharacteristic of the pattern of the Old Testament that referenced the Savior more subtly.

To me the bold declaration of Jesus Christ is the very power of the Book of Mormon. Of course, we must receive a spiritual witness that the book is of God. But once that is obtained, the purposes of Christ, the reality of His life and Resurrection, and the clarity of what is necessary to follow Him and obtain eternal life with Him are strikingly tangible before us.

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The Testimony of Jesus Christ

Accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, reading and pondering the great sermons on Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon bring a certain witness of their truthfulness. I love to glide through the Book of Mormon feasting upon the powerful doctrines of Christ: Nephi's vision of the tree of life, with the angel asking, "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" (1 Nephi 11:16); Lehi's testimony that "redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth" (2 Nephi 2:6); Jacob's addition that He is "the keeper of the gate ... and he employeth no servant there" (2 Nephi 9:41).

We then follow with King Benjamin teaching us of the qualities of discipleship, with his unwavering declaration that there is "no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ" (Mosiah 3:17).

We are soon with Abinadi, about to give his life for what he believes:

"But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death, is swallowed up in Christ.

"He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened" (Mosiah 16:8–9).

Alma brings the beautiful doctrines of the Atonement, justice, and mercy to life: "The plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also" (Alma 42:15).

Then we come to the marvelous visit of the Savior to the children of Lehi. We too feel His love, His compassion, His teachings, His own testimony:

"This is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father. ...

"And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross ... that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil" (3 Nephi 27:13–14).

Finally the closing appeals of Mormon and Moroni: "Know ye that ye must ... repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God" (Mormon 7:5). "Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32).