

Christ in the Book of Mormon



WITNESSES

Summer 1994

No. 85

"It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation."
Helaman 2:74

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Powerful Personal Testimonies of Christ from the Book of Mormon

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Through research, publications, seminars, and related projects, members of FRAA seek to assist in bringing forth the light contained in the ancient scriptures of the Book of Mormon. A contribution to the Foundation for Research on Ancient America is tax deductible.

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Cover . . .

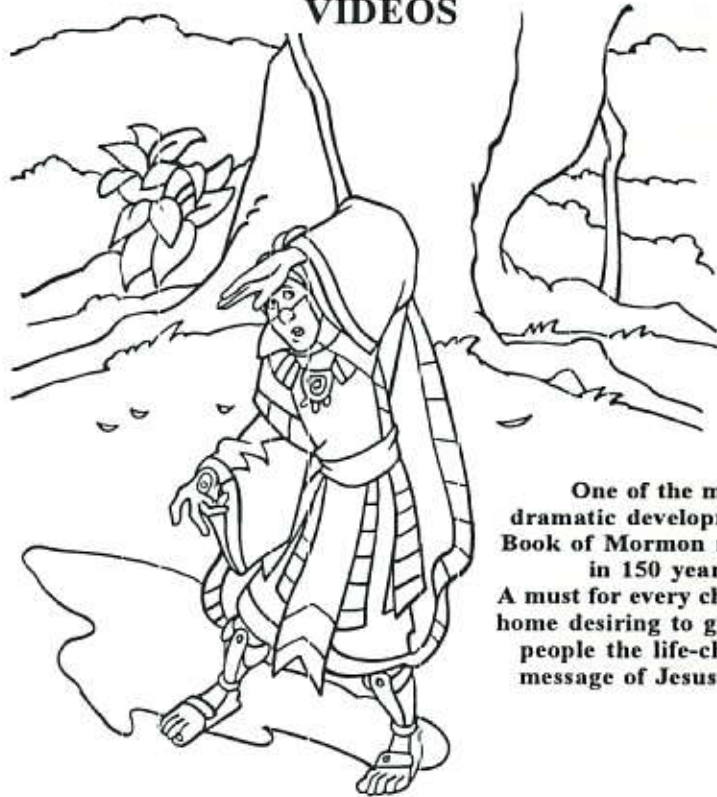
Cover photo is of the bearded man found in the temple located at the north end of the ball court at Chichen-Itza.

Inside the temple, on the central wall, is carved the head of a bearded man (an extraordinary thing, for pre-Columbian peoples generally had no beards). The wall also contains a number of scenes showing everyday and religious events, presided over by the sumptuously attired figure of Kukulcan seated on a jaguar throne, framed by a feathered serpent.

For more about the feathered serpent, see page seven. Photos of the ball court and temple are on the back cover.

Available at FRAA Bookstore

LIVING SCRIPTURES: ANIMATED BOOK OF MORMON VIDEOS



One of the most dramatic developments in Book of Mormon resources in 150 years. A must for every church and home desiring to give young people the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

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Message from the President

Building Our Faith with the Book of Mormon and Becoming Instruments in the Hands of the Lord

The preface of the Book of Mormon states that its purpose is to convince both Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ. The book is a valuable treasure in the hands of the believer who seeks not only to join his life with the Savior's, but to bring others to the Savior as well.

Giving one's life to Christ and becoming an effective instrument, however, requires time and work. The time must be dedicated, productive time, and the work a sincere effort and inquiry.

In one of the greatest sermons in the Book of Mormon, Alma admonishes the Zoramites to "nourish the word," so that they might by faith and great diligence taste of the fruit of the tree of life. Our own quest to obtain this hope must be nourished also, so that our lives become singular and powerful forces for the cause of Christ.

It is our desire that FRAA, through *The Witness*, assist you in your efforts. Beginning with this issue, *The Witness* will more strongly focus on Christ and the principles and message contained in the Book of Mormon. All facets of knowledge which give us greater understanding of the Book of Mormon are important. Internal evidences, such as Hebraisms and chiasmic writing patterns, or archaeological sites and discoveries which tend to support the Book of Mormon, all will continue to be a part of *The Witness*. But its compelling emphasis will be on articles which give greater depth to your inquiry and a burning desire to be like Ammon and the Sons of Mosiah. In Alma 14: 96 they praised God that they had been "...instruments in his hands,... doing this great and marvelous work;"

All of us are instruments, either effective or ineffective, either of great or little value. Building our faith and therefore our usefulness must come through sacrifice, through dedication and a firm conviction that nothing will deter us from becoming instruments "in his hands."

It is our prayer at FRAA that we might accompany you in your journey, to share, to uplift and to enrich your faith with the powerful testimony of the Book of Mormon.

Michael Gatrost

Calendar

Coming up:

- June 13 -- August 5 Summer Book of Mormon Internship Program
- July 21 -- 24 Student intern retreat, Nauvoo, Illinois
- July 24 Book of Mormon Day, Nauvoo, Illinois
- August 21 Book of Mormon Day, Belton, Missouri
- September 11 Book of Mormon Day, Adrian, Missouri

Foundation

News

Blue Springs Book of Mormon Day

Three hundred church members attended FRAA's Book of Mormon Day on June 12 at the Blue Springs Restoration Branch. Internship staff members Jared Anderson and Amy Whitcomb directed the activities. Tom Mitchell presented "Enduring to the End," a slide presentation on one of the more prominent phrases in the Book of Mormon. Michael Gatrost introduced "Testimonies of Jesus Christ by the Prophets in the Book of Mormon."

1994 Internship

June 13, thirteen interns began FRAA's third-year offering of a six-week work/study program in which young people ages 16-22 engage in classroom study, attend lectures by guest speakers and participate in Book of Mormon Days across the country. See article on page 9.

New Sign for Bookstore

FRAA now has a much larger sign advertising its Book of Mormon Bookstore thanks to the efforts of Tom Deal. The sign can be easily seen from Truman Road.

Congregation Book Stewards

More than fifty congregations are participating with FRAA to host book fairs in which stimulating new materials are introduced to congregations. If you would like to be part of this exciting witness, contact FRAA's bookstore representative Linda Trimble at 461-FRAA.



Above is Jean Robison, a dedicated FRAA Book Steward.

POWERFUL PERSONAL

John Welch is an attorney and professor at Brigham Young University. He has authored numerous articles and books on the Book of Mormon. In 1987 he was a guest speaker at FRAA's Book of Mormon Day at the RLDS Auditorium, and in 1991 he spoke at FRAA's Utah Regional Book of Mormon Conference.

One most important function of the Book of Mormon is to convey to the modern world powerful testimonies of the divine mission and essential attributes of Jesus Christ, "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal god" (preface). The Book of Mormon is a convincing witness for Jesus Christ because its writers freely shared their personal testimonies of him. By examining and comparing their testimonies, we can see that they are both similar and different: while agreeing in their basic truths and doctrines, they differ in their emphasis and style. Most interestingly, the attributes of Jesus emphasized by the various prophets in the Nephite records are often the attributes with which each prophet especially identified because of his own spiritual experiences, callings, and individual circumstances.

Jesus was personally known to many Book of Mormon prophets. He appeared to several, including Lehi (1 Nephi 1:8), Nephi (II Nephi 8:2-3), Jacob (II Nephi 1:64-66), Mormon (Mormon 1:16), the brother of Jared (Ether 1:77-78), and Moroni (Ether 5:40), as well as to the multitude in III Nephi.

All Book of Mormon prophets taught "more or less" (Mosiah 8:11-12; cf. Jacob 3:5-6) the same "word" of belief in Jesus Christ. In visions, public speeches, and personal statements, they typically declared (1) that Jesus is the Son of God, (2) who would come down to earth to live as a mortal, (3) heal the sick, cast out devils, and suffer physically and spiritually, (4) take upon himself the sins of the world and redeem his people, (5) be put to death by crucifixion and rise from the dead, (6) bring to pass the resurrection of all mankind, and (7) judge all people in the last day according to their works.

Alma invited the Zoramite poor to plant that seed of faith in their hearts. The specific "word" that he wanted them to plant (see Alma 16:196-200) appears to epitomize the basic Nephite testimony embracing these seven points.

The prophets of the Book of Mormon regularly referred to these points when they testified of Christ. Accordingly, on another occasion, Alma essentially rehearsed the same seven points in the city of Gideon and expressly identified them as the "testimony which is in me" (Alma 5:23).

No doubt these points of testimony were distilled from the words of the Nephite prophets who had preceded Alma.

TESTIMONIES OF CHRIST FROM THE BOOK OF MORMON

Part 1 of 2

by John W. Welch
Brigham Young University

All seven elements can be found scattered throughout the writings of Nephi (I Nephi 3:82-87, 5:237-244; II Nephi 11:21-23), Jacob (II Nephi 6:8-36), Abinadi (Mosiah 8:32-37), and Benjamin (Mosiah 1:97-106). It appears, however, that Alma molded them into a concise statement of belief that was especially useful in the newly established churches in the land of Zarahemla over which he presided.

This basic pattern of belief persisted to the end of Nephite

civilization, as is reflected in one of Moroni's last testimonies of Christ found in Mormon (4:71-74).

Building upon this foundational testimony of Christ, each Book of Mormon prophet accented certain attributes of Christ. Judging simply from the names and titles used in referring to the Lord, we can see they testified of Jesus in their own individual ways, revealing things about Christ and also about themselves.

LEHI

From the visions and revelations he received, Lehi knew the tender mercies of the promised Messiah. The surviving words of Lehi contain some fifteen different titles that refer to this God, the One he saw descending out of the midst of heaven (I Nephi 1:8). Except for five common Israelite terms infrequently used by Lehi ("God," "Lord," "Lord God Almighty," "Holy One," and "Holy One of Israel"), all of Lehi's designations cluster around redemptive and mediating functions of this Messiah. Lehi most often calls him "a Messiah," "the Messiah," "the true Messiah," "the holy Messiah," "this Redeemer," "their Redeemer," or "thy Redeemer." In addition Lehi learned from the angel that this Redeemer would be called "the Lamb of God." Lehi's messianic terminology manifests greater variation than that of any other Book of Mormon prophet, and Lehi is the only one ever to call the Lord "a Savior" (I Nephi 3:4), "a prophet" (I Nephi 3:4), "the great Mediator" (II Nephi 1:119-123), or "first fruits unto God" (II Nephi 1:76).

These points take on added meaning in the context of Lehi's personal experiences. To Lehi, who fled from Jerusalem and the lands of his inheritance, the Messiah would be, above all, a Redeemer who would come to restore the fallen, the lost, and the displaced. He would restore them



Lehi © J. Robert Farley/Zarahemla Research Foundation

to the lands of their inheritance. He alone is seen as the "great Mediator" who makes it possible for all people to choose between good and evil (II Nephi 1:116-123) and thereby be redeemed and live again.

Lehi emphasized God's mercy to all mankind (I Nephi 1:13). Of all Book of Mormon prophets, he spoke especially of the "multitude of his tender mercies" (I Nephi 2:47; cf. 1:21-23), of his "infinite goodness" (II Nephi 1:22-23), and of the "arms of his love" (II Nephi 1:29).

Unlike most other Book of Mormon prophets (who also served as kings, judges, and military leaders), Lehi was exclusively a prophet. He stood firmly in the tradition of Israelite prophecy. Hence Lehi was readily and uniquely inclined to identify Jesus as "a prophet" (I Nephi 3:4; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15: "God will raise up unto thee a Prophet" like unto Moses), and to make special mention of the fact that another prophet would prepare the way of the Lord before his coming (I Nephi 3:8; cf. Isaiah 40:3). Lehi's strong Israelite roots are also apparent in his reference to the Lord as the "first fruits" that typically belonged to God.

Lehi knew many things about the coming Messiah, but not everything. The name of Christ, for example, was apparently first revealed to Jacob after Lehi's death (II Nephi 7:5-7), and it was Nephi who disclosed later yet that the Messiah's "name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (II Nephi 11:35-36).

NEPHI

Nephi followed his father in using the names of "Messiah," "Redeemer," and "Savior," but he introduced several other terms

and concepts as he obtained greater understanding of his father's visions. The names that Nephi used for Christ reflect this.

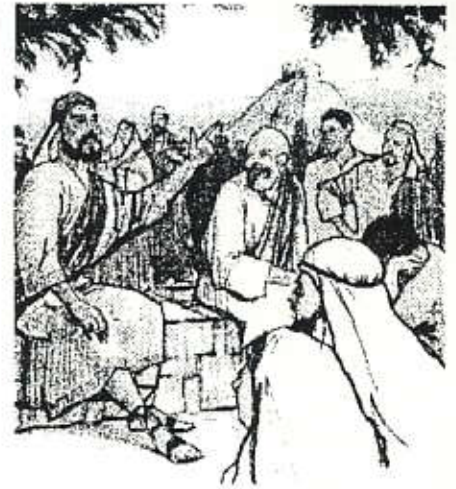
Most notable among these names are those that reflect the sonship of Christ. On twenty occasions, Nephi identifies Jesus either as "the Son of God," "the only begotten Son," "the only begotten of the Father," "the Son of the everlasting God," "the Son of the Eternal Father," "the Son of the Living God," "the Son of the Most High God," "the Son of Righteousness," "the Son," or the "beloved Son."

Nephi (who himself knew what it meant to be persecuted for righteousness' sake, both by those at Jerusalem and by his own brothers) referred sixty times in his writings to Jesus Christ as "the Lamb" or "the Lamb of God" (as the angel called him), befitting the divine offering of his sacrifice. After Nephi's time, however, the phrase "Lamb of God" rarely appears in the Book of Mormon (perhaps sheep were less common in the New World).

As ruler and teacher of his people, Nephi emphasized the rulership of Christ, the only true God who would ever come. Nephi particularly saw Christ as the ultimate source of life and law, the only one in whom the law would be fulfilled (II Nephi 11:26-34, 11:45-51).

ABINADI

Abinadi stands out as a lone prophetic voice, singularly and courageously decrying the perversions of King Noah and his priests. After spending two years as a fugitive, Abinadi returned to the city of Nephi by himself to deliver his prophetic warnings and condemnations. He was alone in his preaching, alone in his tenacious rebuttal against



Noah's court, and alone in the flames of martyrdom. He suffered, an innocent victim who had done no evil, although four different legal allegations were leveled against him.

The attributes of Christ described by Abinadi correlate readily with his experiences. Primarily, he depicted Christ as one who would innocently suffer, alone, to redeem his people. Three times Abinadi emphatically asserted that God himself would bear the iniquities of His people: "Were it not for the atonement, which God himself shall make" (Mosiah 8:5); "God himself should come down among the children of men" (Mosiah 8:13); "God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people" (Mosiah 8:28). That major point of emphasis for Abinadi was also a new formulation. No other Book of Mormon prophet before Abinadi had used those exact words (and only Alma does so after him; see Alma 19:97). So unequivocal was Abinadi's formulation that the priests of Noah found it the basis of their blasphemy charge: "For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men" (Mosiah 9:11-12). Just as Abinadi himself went down alone into the pit of

certain martyrdom that awaited him in Noah's court, so God himself would come into the world.

The dominant feature of Abinadi's teaching is about redemption and the fact that it will come through suffering. (The words "redeem" or "redemption" appear nineteen times in Abinadi's words.) Despite God's mighty power, he himself will be "oppressed" and "afflicted" (Mosiah 8:14). Abinadi drew those words from the prophecies of Isaiah that the servant would be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;... afflicted.... Wounded for our transgressions,... oppressed, and he was afflicted" (Isaiah 53:3-7; Mosiah 8:18-22). As Isaiah prophesied, "he hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isaiah 53:12; Mosiah 8:27). Of all book of Mormon prophets, Abinadi was similarly called upon to surrender his will to God, even unto death by fire.

BENJAMIN

Around 124 B.C., King Benjamin received from the angel of the Lord a succinct explanation of the atoning mission of Christ (Mosiah 1:93-129). Those words became the centerpiece of Benjamin's speech, during which he announced to his people that his son Mosiah was their new king (Mosiah 1:15-16; 1:68-69) and gave the people a new name that distinguished them above all people (Mosiah 1:17).

On a day when the newly appointed king normally received his new coronation name and titles, Benjamin solemnly disclosed for the first time an extended name of Jesus Christ and gave it to the entire multitude by way of covenant. The new

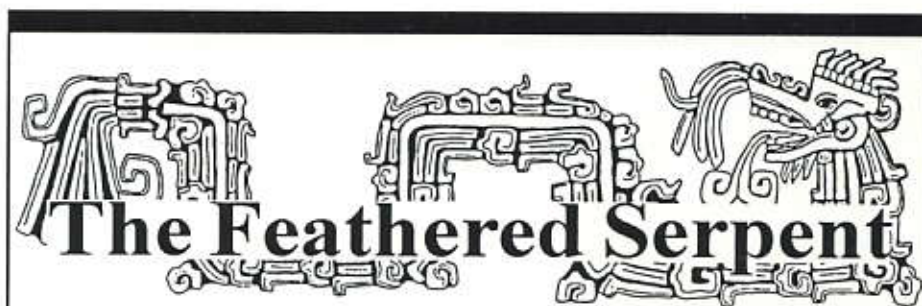
name testified that the Savior would be called "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 1:102).

Benjamin's speech, which was delivered at the temple in Zarahemla where blood sacrifices were routinely performed under the law of Moses (Mosiah 1:30), emphasized more than any other aspect of Christ's ministry the atoning functions of his blood. Four times Benjamin mentioned the "blood" of Christ in connection with the atonement

(Mosiah 1:107,111-118), and the people answered him saying, "...apply the atoning blood of Christ,..." (Mosiah 2:2-4).

Other Book of Mormon prophets had previously spoken and would later speak of having their garments washed white in the blood of the Lamb, but no prophet gave such clear information about the atoning work of Christ's blood itself or placed such central attention on the fact that Christ's blood actually would be spilt. Benjamin alone described Jesus' bloody sweat coming from every

(continued on page 10)



by
Brenda Trimble

The central focus of the New Testament and the Book of Mormon is the Messiah. These scriptures testify of the beauty, simplicity, and power of the love of God through the ministry and ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Through the faith of His followers, this message has been kept alive down through the ages. In the New World, it was written on metal plates by the Nephites, now known as the Book of Mormon. It can be found in the oral tradition of the Indians regarding the Bearded White God. It can also be found in the symbolism in Mesoamerican archaeology.

Scriptural Origin of the Feathered Serpent

The feathered serpent, symbol of their most important God, is widespread throughout Mesoamerica. The Maya refer to him as Kukulcan or Gucumatz. The Aztecs and the Toltecs knew him as Quetzalcoatl. Although the idea of using a feathered serpent symbol may seem foreign, and perhaps even cult-oriented when viewed from our modern cultural perspective, an examination of possible origins of its usage may show a deeper meaning— one based in scripture. Consider the following:

And the people spake against God, and against Moses....

And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

(continued on next page)

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "...pray unto the Lord, that he will take away the serpents from us." And Moses prayed for the people.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived (Numbers 21:5-9).

Understanding the significance of the fiery serpent being raised up by Moses in the wilderness can be increased by reading John 3:14-15:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The fiery serpent was a type and shadow of Christ who was to come. This was reiterated by Alma in the Book of Mormon as he spoke to the Zoramites:

Behold, he was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold, a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live (Alma 16:191).

God was trying to show the people that, although they had sinned against Him, all they had to do was to exercise faith through obedience to His commandment to come back into His presence. In this case, He asked the people to simply look upon the brazen serpent and they would be healed. After Christ was lifted up on the cross, we were to look upon Him in faith to be healed of our afflictions or diseases and forgiven our transgressions. However, we are told in I Nephi 5:135:

And the labor which they had to perform was to look! and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished.

Symbol Usage in Language Development

Some of the earliest examples of the serpent symbol in Mesoamerica ...*first appear in the Late Preclassic Period, on carved monuments of Izapa, Kaminaljuyú, and other early sites of the Pacific Slope and Guatemala Highlands.*¹ The Late Preclassic Period, 300 B.C. - A.D. 300, lies well within the Nephite time frame. The Nephites are

believed to have first settled in the Guatemalan highlands and El Salvador.

The Nephites, recognizing the significance of the records which they had brought with them, would have sought ways to share this information with those with whom they associated. One means of doing this was through the use of symbols such as the *feathered serpent*.

In speaking of the feathered serpent, Karl Taube states, *I suspect that the serpent wing is a phonetic device providing a reading for "sky." The words for "sky" and "serpent" are generally homophonous in Mayan languages, and there are frequent substitutions between their respective signs in Classic Maya hieroglyphic texts.... Thus, whereas the Yucatec word "kan" means "snake," "ka'an" signifies "sky," and "ka'anil," "celestial thing."... The serpent head, then, appears to be placed on the wing to delineate and reaffirm the notion of "sky" — hence the crossbands (another well-known sky symbol) frequently placed under the mouth of the serpent. Thus, rather than defining one particular entity, the serpent wing may simply mark any bird to which it is attached as a "celestial bird."*²

One possible reason that *sky* and *serpent* are related in Mayan languages is that the Nephite settlers developed the symbol to convey the concept of the serpent being lifted up in the wilderness. Considering the brazen serpent was to be a type and shadow of Christ, it should come as no surprise that the people of Mesoamerica continued to use the names of Quetzalcoatl, Kukulcan, and Gucumatz (all meaning *feathered serpent*) to refer to Christ after His visitation to the Americas.

Conclusion

Although a symbol may have pure origins, corruption in its meaning can occur over time. Just as the brazen serpent was destroyed in Old Testament times by Hezekiah because the people began to idolize the object (II Kings 18:4), corruption crept into the use of the serpent symbol in Mesoamerica. Although the symbol may have originally communicated a spiritual concept, the serpent symbol so often seen in carvings on later-period buildings may be more reflective of Lamanite influence involving



1994 Summer Internship Under Way

by Dale Godfrey



Julie Gatrost instructs interns in the Gatrost home.

The plans are laid; the interviews are done; the selections made; the staff is ready; the funding is in place; the excitement is high; the 1994 FRAA Internship Program has begun. In its third year, the FRAA Internship Program provides an opportunity for young people between the ages of 16 and 22 to earn summer income while they conduct research projects and learn more of the Book of Mormon.

Participants come from several states and from diverse backgrounds. Some have never read the entire Book of Mormon while others are very familiar with it.

Some come from large congregations while others are the only Saints in their communities. Some have to travel significant distances to meet in the homes of other Saints for worship.

In the fall of 1993, a committee was formed to evaluate the program and suggest changes which would enhance the program and its value to the interns.

Consistent with the direction of the Board of Directors, a major focus of the program will be on the message of the Book of Mormon and developing the ability to share



Interns study in the FRAA Library.



"Skip" Robison inspires students at the intern retreat.

that message. Both classes and projects will reflect this focus.

In addition to classes and projects, the interns will participate in congregational Book of Mormon Days as well as take tours to several areas of historical significance to the Restoration, including Nauvoo.

We wish to thank the many individuals and congregations who have so generously provided financial support for this worthwhile endeavor. We ask that you continue your prayerful support as we embark on this exciting summer of learning and adventure.



(Feathered Serpent continued)

idol worship. As Paul Hanson once wrote, *Confusion results unless a distinction is made between the perversion of the symbol and the symbol itself.*³

Unlike the stone symbols found in Mesoamerica, the message of the Book of Mormon has not been corrupted. It remains today as it was written, pure and beautiful, a simple but powerful testimony of Jesus Christ.

1. Taube, Karl A. "A Representation of the Principal Bird Diety in Paris Codex." Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing. No. 6 p.2. 1987.
2. Ibid.
3. Hanson, Paul M. "The Feathered Serpent in Mexico and Central America." The Saints' Herald. December 4, 1950. p.6.



Actual photograph of the feathered serpent

pore in anguish for his people (Mosiah 1:100-101).

Interestingly, Benjamin linked the atoning blood of Christ with the full range of atonement concepts under the law of Moses; he assured the people that Christ's blood atones for the sins of all those who humble themselves and repent and for the sins of those "who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned" (Mosiah 1:107). The need under the law of Moses to atone even for sins committed in ignorance is stated in Numbers 15:27-29, and such iniquities were of particular interest on the Day of Atonement, when the scapegoat carried away "all their iniquities" (Leviticus 16:22).

In addition to the atoning dimensions of Christ's blood that were of special notice to Benjamin, the Lord's kingship was prominent in Benjamin's testimony of Jesus. That is not surprising since Benjamin was a strong, benevolent king. Benjamin referred favorably to the Lord as the "heavenly King" who was righteously represented by the earthly king (Mosiah 1:51) and uniquely spoke five times of the Lord's being "omnipotent" (Mosiah 1:97-98, 116-118, 122; 3:21). Consistent with Benjamin's personal interests and circumstances in life, he was the only Book of Mormon writer ever to use the word "omnipotent."



(Look for Part II of this article in the next issue of The Witness.)

This article has previously been published by F.A.R.M.S. and the Deseret Book Company. It has been edited by FRAA's editors for The Witness magazine. The complete article can be found in Doctrines of the Book of Mormon from the 1991 Sperry Symposium. (FRAA carries this book in its bookstore.) Used by permission.

Faithful Souls: A Book of Mormon Day in Miami, Oklahoma

by Tom Mitchell

Book of Mormon Day Committee Chairman

Amidst native American legends and the flat plains of northeast Oklahoma is nestled the small town of Miami. As Dale Godfrey and I left the interstate, I could not help thinking how much Miami reminded me of so many hamlets and villages I have visited in southern Missouri and throughout the Midwest. In these areas small groups of Saints struggle courageously to survive, miles from other branches and extended fellowship. But this older town, peaceful and friendly, greeted us that evening.

We held a worship service Saturday night in their fine facility which has been recently expanded through the generosity of one of the town's citizens and remodeled through the hard work of the Saints. The spirit of God was in attendance as these faithful souls eagerly prayed and testified of Christ and shared their testimonies of the Book of Mormon. I was overwhelmed by the sincere prayers of thanksgiving on our behalf which they offered. After the service, they held a wonderful reception for all who came. We conversed for quite some time about the goodness of God.

On Sunday over fifty people gathered to participate in slide and video presentations, see new bookstore materials, and learn more of the mission and activities of the Foundation. The highlight of the morning was a new slide series entitled "Enduring to the End," presented by Dale. With

assurance and insight given of the Spirit, he interwove several testimonies of the Lord's movement in his life with council and reassurance to the Saints of Miami. After an excellent lunch provided by the congregation and a heartfelt thank you to Mrs. Fink for her gracious hospitality and lodging, it was time to go.

Saying goodbye was difficult. As we once again headed back onto the interstate, part of our hearts remained there with those Saints. We sensed their struggles but also their commitment to God's calling to "endure to the end." We look forward to the next opportunity to meet with them and until that time bid them godspeed.

We affirm, as did Jewel and Wayne Kirk, who later wrote to us from Miami regarding the weekend, "We were ministered to from the beginning.... We felt the Lord's spirit present."



(See Calendar page for future Book of Mormon Day scheduling)

Quotable Quotes:

"We are made alive in Christ, because of our faith."
II Nephi 14:4

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him."
Moroni 10:29

Alma Houston is truly a man of great faith. I first met Alma 26 years ago at a young adult adventure camp in Wyoming. He was a hard working young Iowa farmer who was afflicted from birth with cerebral palsy. I felt sorry for Alma in his handicapped condition. Within a few days, however, listening to him bear valiant testimony of Jesus Christ and how the Lord had blessed him all the days of his life, I began to realize that his limitations were only physical. Alma was a "spiritual giant." His faith and great desire to serve the Lord have touched the hearts of many people at youth camps, reunions, and any place where his testimony is shared. Several years ago Alma was ordained to the office of priest in the Aaronic priesthood at the Decatur City Restoration Branch. He lives on a small farm near Eagleville, Iowa, and continues to witness for Jesus.

Ed Slauter

My Testimony of the Book of Mormon

By Alma Houston

In Canada in the late 1960s the older youth gathered one August for a week of adventure camp. One day Barbara Smith Wilkinson asked me if I had ever read the Book of Mormon. My reply was "No, not yet."

I had read the Doctrine and Covenants from cover to cover the year before, and I believed it to be the true word of God. But it was very hard for me to sit down and read, being a young farmer with cerebral palsy and so tired at night. I had tried to read the Book of Mormon but never could get very far, only about 20 pages. Then I lost interest. But this time I wanted to know more and had a challenge to read the book from cover to cover in one year.

I had prayed and fasted to have a better understanding. Having faith in Jesus Christ, I tried again, this time reading a page or two or more at night in my quiet room, asking the Lord to help me to be successful in reaching my goal for that year. Early one morning, when I had

20 to 60 pages yet to read, I was visited by a personage. I am not sure if it was a dream or a vision, but I saw him face to face. He did not speak to me. But he looked as though he was happy and pleased that I was reading the Book of Mormon. He was there only a few seconds, and then he left. I am very thankful for this experience because from that time forth, I learned to feast on the words of Jesus Christ. I have tried to study and read to get a better understanding and to know of the Spirit of God working in the lives of men of old who loved the Lord and set an example for their people to live by to have Zion.

I know this record is true and that the Book of Mormon was translated and brought forth by the power of God.

To me, it is simple and plain to feel God's spirit today. I read the words of Nephi,

King Benjamin, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni, to mention a few, who have lived in faith and done a great work in preparing their people to live according to God's commandments.

The Lord has blest me many times when I had desire and put forth an effort to read the scriptures and testimonies of others about God's blessings in their lives even today in 1994.



(Pictured above, Alma Houston)

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Believe in

The Book of Mormon is a powerful witness of Jesus Christ. Its pages are filled with rich, meaningful testimonies of Jesus and his eternal plan of salvation.

Recently I was reading II Nephi, Chapter 11, where Nephi recorded these words in verse 43: "For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God;"

The words "believe in Christ" seemed to leap from the book into my heart. I was reminded of a very unusual experience I witnessed several years ago at Denver International Airport.

My flight from Denver to Kansas City was already boarding when I arrived at the gate. The airplane was jam packed with passengers. I collapsed in my seat, anxious to get home to my family after a week of veterinary meetings in Portland, Oregon. I was physically drained and needed a good rest, but more importantly, I needed a renewed testimony of Christ at work in the lives of His people.

As I settled into my seat, the flight attendant announced, "Our flight has been overbooked. Any two people who would be willing to give up their seats will receive two free round-trip tickets to anywhere in the continental U.S., good for one year."

As I looked up to see what kind of response she would receive to such a generous offer, I noticed a husky man in his mid-thirties bolt out of his seat with his wife right behind him. They rushed to the front of the airplane in response to the free tickets. Excitedly they followed the flight attendant off the plane.

Surely they must have a great need for the tickets, I thought to myself. They were so eager to get them. A few minutes later something happened that I had never witnessed before.

The recipient of the free tickets ran back onto the airplane and stood at the front of the coach compartment which was filled with 150 passengers. Exuberantly he raised his arms and with a loud voice blared out, "People, the Lord has answered our prayers! We have five children on the East Coast. We only had enough money to buy tickets to Kansas City. We prayed that the Lord would provide a way for us to reach our children. He has given us two round trip tickets to the East Coast. The Lord has answered our prayers. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!"

His eyes were filled with tears of joy as he ran off the airplane to join his companion. He left a compartment filled with stunned listeners to his

Christ, and Deny Him Not

declaration of faith.

For a few moments, no one dared to speak; many of us sat with our mouths gaping open in amazement.

The flight attendant's voice came over the speaker system. Softly she asked, "What do I say after that? That's going to be a tough act to follow!"

My heart leaped with joy. I knew that my prayers had been answered. As the young ticket receiver shared his fresh and vibrant testimony of how the Lord answered his prayers, I felt exhaustion, tension, and stress leave my body. They were replaced by the peace of the Master's spirit. I was deeply moved by the childlike faith of this young couple who trusted that once they got to Kansas City, the Lord would provide the way to their five children. The young man was full of joy and enthusiasm. His eyes sparkled as he, with no fear or hesitation, declared his belief in the Lord who would not fail him.

As I looked around, I noticed several others who appeared to be blessed by the faith of that young couple. An elderly woman sitting near me removed her glasses and dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief. A businessman across the aisle stopped reading his newspaper; a gentle smile replaced a frown, and the harsh lines around his eyes softened. He folded his *Wall Street Journal* and looked out the window.

I leaned back in my seat and shut my eyes. I asked

myself if such a blessing had come to me, would I have had the courage and faith to share my joy with 150 strangers? I had to admit that I would have praised my Lord for such a blessing and walked away rejoicing.

Since that experience, I have tried diligently to be a more valiant witness of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon prophets courageously declared their belief in Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel. They not only wrote of Christ, they actually knew Him.

Nephi writes: "And we talk of

Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins....

"And now behold I say unto you, that the right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel;" (II Nephi 11:48, 55)



Illustration by Rick Farley

FRAAA SUMMMER

Each issue of *The Witness* will carry reviews of books which we believe will be of particular interest to our readers. We encourage you to order these for your children or grandchildren, for your neighbors or for personal growth in the knowledge of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

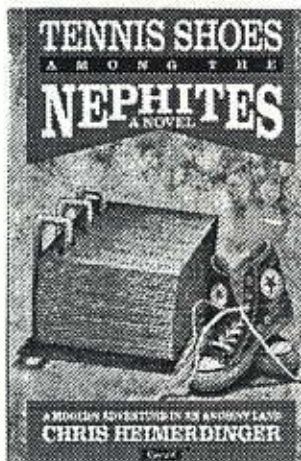
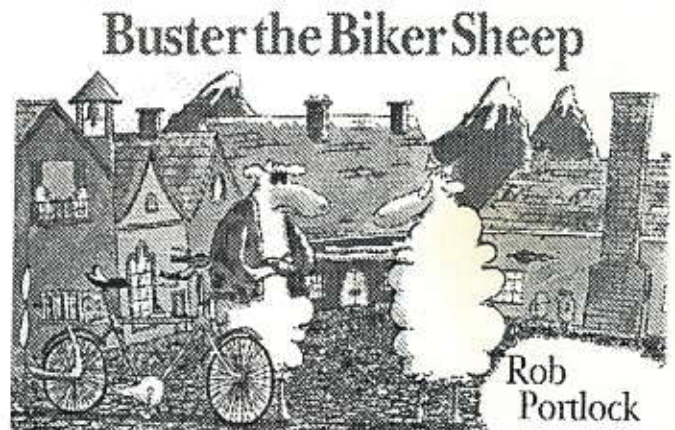
For Young Children (Ages 3-8)

Buster The Biker Sheep by Rob Portlock \$ 4.99

Wendy and the other sheep believed in the shepherd! They knew one day he would come. But Buster thought they were wrong. He made fun of the other sheep. "They'd been sheared one too many times" he thought.

Then one day, Buster got in trouble...would the shepherd come?

(A book to introduce young children to Jesus, the Shepherd.)



Young People (Ages 8-13)

Tennis Shoes Among The Nephites \$ 8.95

by Chris Heimerdinger

Jim Hawkins, a 13 year old, had a bad attitude, especially about church. Garth Plimpton was a fanatic about studying the scriptures. But together they stumbled upon a passageway that hurled them into an ancient world, into the pages of the Book of Mormon and a journey of suspense and danger that would change their lives.

(A book designed to make the Book of Mormon live for young people. Rated excellent by one 10 year old.)

Young People (Ages 13-17)

Young Lions by Barbara A. Lewis \$ 9.95

Ordinary young people with extraordinary courage. Twenty-two stories of faith and courage involving teens who are Latter Day Saints. "Susan's greatest dream was to become a teacher, but in East Germany, teachers had to teach atheism. Would she have to give up her dream for her religion?"

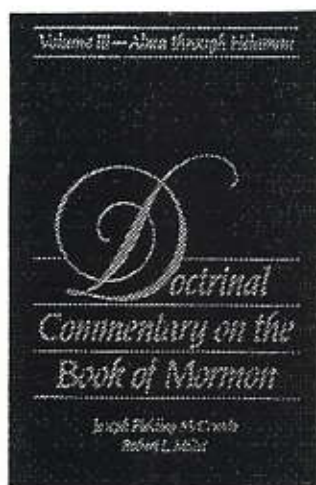
(True stories of teens who stood apart.)



BOOK REVIEWS

Books reviewed will vary for different age groups and may be ordered through your FRAA Book Steward, ordered directly from FRAA, or obtained through our bookstore. For further information, call (816) 461-FRAA (3722) or visit the bookstore at 210 West White Oak, Independence, Missouri.

Adults (All Ages)



Doctrinal Commentaries on the Book of Mormon

by J. F. McConkie & R. L. Millet (4 Volumes) \$ 13.95 ea.

These commentaries focus on the most significant aspect of the Book of Mormon-- doctrine. Dividing the material into convenient topical sections, these books quote Book of Mormon verses, then give a detailed explanation and commentary upon the meaning of the verses, drawing upon scholarship and quotes from Joseph Smith as well as others.

(This will be a valuable addition to your library. Its insightful commentary opens the pages of the Book of Mormon and enables readers to have a greater knowledge of the writings of Book of Mormon prophets. An excellent tool for sermon preparation.)

Living The Book of Mormon

\$ 11.95

by Allan K. Burgess

A guide to understanding and applying its principles in today's world. Select verses from the Book of Mormon reveal their application in our everyday lives.

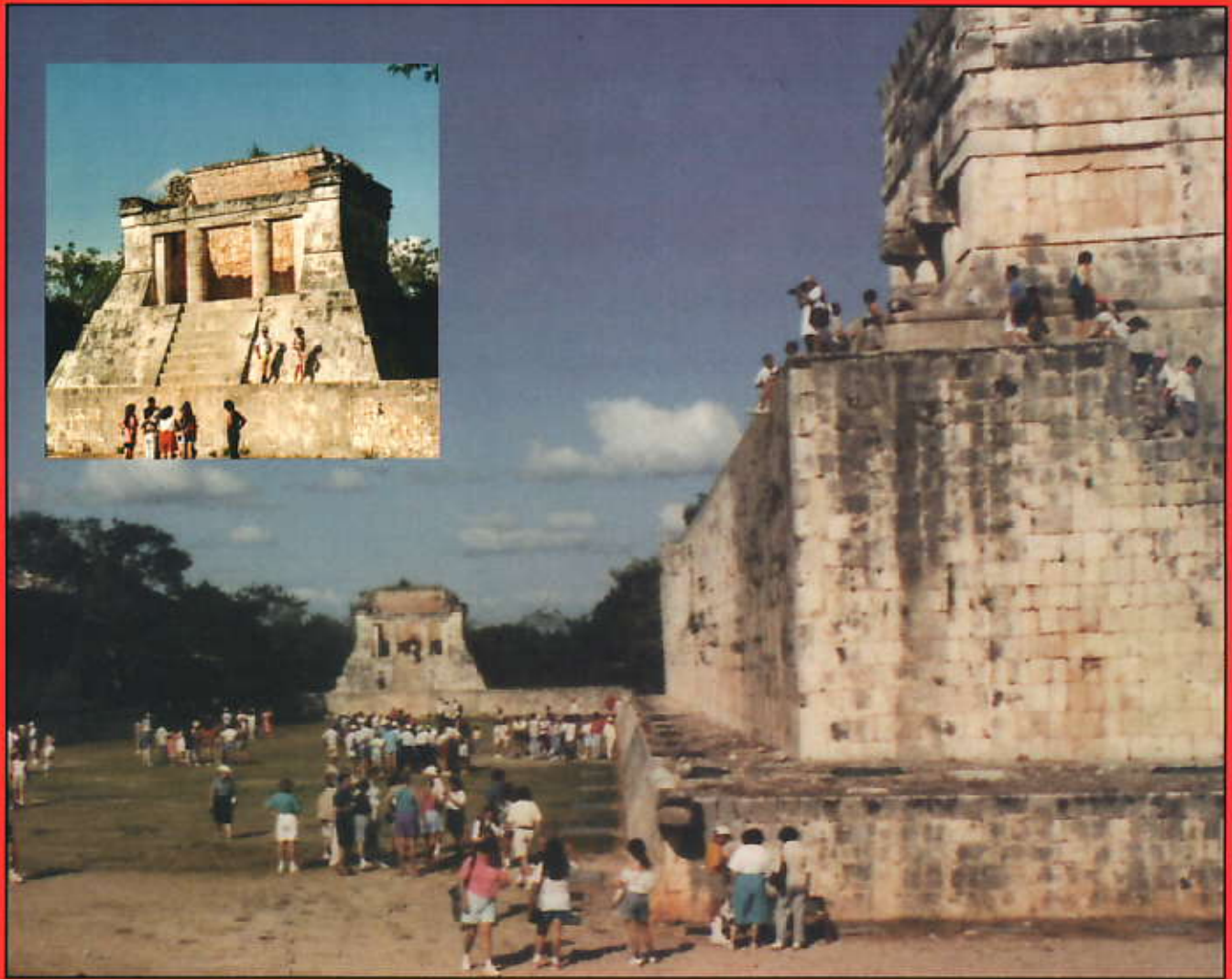
(An excellent resource for learning what it means to lead a Christ-like life.)

LIVING THE BOOK OF MORMON

A GUIDE TO
UNDERSTANDING
AND APPLYING
ITS PRINCIPLES
IN TODAY'S
WORLD



ALLAN K. BURGESS



(Pictured above is the ball court at Chichen-Itza. Inset picture is of the Temple of the Bearded Man at the north end of the ball court.)

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