

“Whoso Treasureth Up My Word Shall Not Be Deceived”

Clyde J. Williams

DURING THE FINAL WEEK OF THE Savior’s life, the disciples came to Jesus on the Mount of Olives asking what the signs of His Second Coming would be. While discoursing on those signs, Jesus gave an important key to His disciples, then and now, who wish to avoid being misled. He declared, “Whoso treasureth up my *word*, shall not be deceived” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37; emphasis added). While one cannot know the exact thoughts of the Savior at this time, it is apparent that the *word* referred to here goes well beyond what is written in Matthew 24. An important question to ask is, how does the Book of Mormon relate to this promise of the Savior? To effectively address this question, we must make a more detailed analysis of what is meant by the *word*.

The Savior was referred to as the *Word* in the Gospel of John (see John 1:1). He is the *Word* in several respects. He is the source of the *word*, or gospel, given to

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humankind in mortality. He is the official spokesman for the Father and is the *word* in this regard. He is also the perfect living example of the *word* to all and thus is the epitome of the *word*. Anyone who speaks or writes authoritatively in His behalf is declaring His *word*.

In studying and teaching the Book of Mormon for over thirty years, I have discovered new perspectives and insights during each reading. On one of these occasions as I was going through the book, it came to my attention that an underlying message throughout the entire Book of Mormon had to do with the *word* and what people did with it. In one sense the Book of Mormon is a story about the importance and power of the *word*. Therefore, it is a message centered in Christ, who is the source of the *word*. The book begins with Lehi receiving the *word* through prophets and eventually through his own visions; it ends with the last Nephite prophet prophesying that the *word* written in the book would “hiss forth from generation to generation” (Moroni 10:28).

A major focus of 1 Nephi 3–6 is the effort to acquire the plates of brass, which contained the *word* of the Lord. One of the most profound yet unsettling accounts to some is the manner in which the plates were obtained. Why are so much time and detail devoted to explaining the frustrating efforts to obtain the plates? Why is Nephi commanded to slay Laban? These and other questions are often raised. Among the many answers that can be given, perhaps the most significant is that the story illustrates just how important and indispensable the *word* is. This lesson must have even crossed the minds of Laman and Lemuel, as they surely would have asked Zoram about how he could not recognize Nephi or his voice when he came impersonating Laban. The manner in which the Lord preserved this master copy of the *word* is quite remarkable. It became a story

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retold among Nephite faithful throughout their generations. This preservation of the *word* would not only help keep Lehi’s family and their posterity from perishing much sooner, but it would also help many other nations avoid or delay the same fate.

The Source of the *Word*

The Book of Mormon identifies at least five sources from which people might obtain the *word*. These sources include Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, angels, prophets, and the scriptures. Amulek raised the “great question,” is the *word* in Christ? He then affirmed that Alma had already shown that “the *word* is in Christ unto salvation” (Alma 34:6; emphasis added). Nephi taught that “angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost,” and therefore “they speak the *words* of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3; emphasis added). While discussing the role of angels, Mormon explained that the office of the ministry of angels is “to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father.” They do this “by declaring the *word* of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord” (Moroni 7:31; emphasis added). The prophets throughout the Book of Mormon each declare the importance of the Son of God, His ministry, and His gospel. Finally, the entirety of the Book of Mormon record was prepared and written to emphasize the importance of the *word* that is in Christ.

The Importance of Preserving the *Word*

From the earliest point in the Book of Mormon, the reader is presented with several illustrations that emphasize the importance of the *word*. Lehi heard the *word* from other prophets in his day and was led to ponder and pray about their message (see 1 Nephi 1:4–5). Because of his

spiritual yearnings, he was called of the Lord and received the *word* through visions. The *word* of the Lord led Lehi to take his family and begin a journey that was destined to change the course of many millions of lives. The major story preserved for us from this early journey consists of the revelation that Lehi and his family needed to take with them the most prized compilation of the *word* known to them. The plates of brass contained the prophecies of the holy prophets, the history and genealogy of their people, and the commandments of the Lord (see 1 Nephi 5:11–14, 21).

The experience of acquiring the *word* (on the plates of brass) emphasized to Lehi's sons, and to all who would carefully ponder this account, that this record of the *word* would only be had in the Lord's own way and according to His will. It would be more important than any other possession they would take with them. It is unlikely that even Nephi or Lehi could have imagined at this early stage that this record would lead to the salvation of millions of souls. How could Nephi have understood or imagined all of this as he stood over Laban and wrestled with the promptings of the Spirit to kill him? Yet the Lord knew this record would lead many of Lehi's descendants to remain faithful, write their own sacred *words*, and have solemn experiences that would effect so many generations beyond their own time. It would be difficult to measure, but one can imagine how different the world would be without the influence of the Book of Mormon. This portion of the Lord's *word* would surely not have been written had there been no plates of brass and no prophets like Lehi and Nephi who had "great desires to know of the mysteries of God" (1 Nephi 2:16). The importance of the Book of Mormon in the history of this world will likely astonish most of its inhabitants. Were

it not for the Book of Mormon, the full and complete doctrine concerning Christ and His *word* would be unavailable to the nations of the world today. Truly, nations would rapidly dwindle and perish in unbelief (see 1 Nephi 4:13).

Another early example that illustrates the importance of preserving the *word* is found in the Lord’s instruction to Nephi to keep a second set of plates. While both Nephi and Mormon indicate they did not know the reason for this command, they both knew it was for a “wise purpose” in the Lord (see 1 Nephi 9:5–6; Words of Mormon 1:7). Ultimately this wise purpose was to preserve a significant portion of the *word* that the Lord knew 2,400 years in advance would be lost by Martin Harris.

When the prophet Alma entrusted the sacred records to his son Helaman, he emphasized three major purposes for writing and preserving the sacred *word*. He said that the scriptures “[enlarge] the memory,” “[convince] many of the error of their ways,” and bring “them to a knowledge of God,” all of which will lead them to salvation (Alma 37:8). Surely, this is what the Lord had in mind when He commanded Lehi to send his sons to obtain the plates of brass. Similarly, these purposes would be the foundation for the Lord’s command to all prophets to write those records that have become a part of the *word* of the Lord. The unexcelled power and virtue of the *word* in helping people make permanent positive changes in their lives is exemplified throughout the Book of Mormon (see Alma 31:5). Mormon, the compiler of the book, repeatedly affirms his revealed understanding that the Lord would preserve his *words* for the blessing of those who would have them at some future day (see Words of Mormon 1:11; 3 Nephi 5:14–17; Mormon 5:12–15). These passages and those discussed previously make it clear that the Lord has always made provision for His children to have His *words*.

The Importance of the *Word*

The importance of the *word* is demonstrated profoundly in Lehi's vision of the tree of life. The vision is timeless in that it applies to any period in the history of the world. The key is to come to the tree and partake of the fruit. The meaning of the tree and the fruit was summarized by Elder Neal A. Maxwell: "The love of God for His children is most profoundly expressed in His gift of Jesus as our Redeemer: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son' (John 3:16). To partake of the love of God is to partake of Jesus' Atonement and the emancipations and joys which it can bring."¹ Thus, to more fully understand the tree of life dream, we must know that the tree and its fruit are representative of Christ and His Redemption.²

It is also important to notice that absolutely no one comes to the tree except they follow the specific path that leads to the tree. Furthermore, only those who hold to the rod successfully make it to the tree. The rod, we are told, represents the "*word* of God" (1 Nephi 11:25; emphasis added). While this information is important, it is not sufficient. Clearly, some of those who hold onto the rod fail to remain at the tree. They become ashamed or offended, wander into forbidden paths, and are lost (see 1 Nephi 8:24–28). Without further understanding, this can be both troubling and puzzling. How is it one can hold to the *word* (rod) and yet still fall away? There are important clues if we examine the text of the dream carefully.

The Lord uses parallel language in describing the three groups that come toward the path. In all three cases they are described as "pressing forward" to obtain the path (1 Nephi 8:21, 24, 30). The two groups who use the rod are described uniformly as having "caught hold of the end of the rod of iron" and pressing their way forward (1 Nephi

8:24, 30). However, from this point on, the descriptions of the two groups who come to the tree differ significantly. The manner of holding to the *word* (rod) must make a difference. The first group is found “clinging to the rod” (v. 24) while the second group is “continually holding fast to the rod” (v. 30). Think of these differences in relationship to the way one uses the scriptures (the *word*). Some who read scriptures merely cling lightly or superficially to them and may let go when tempted. They may read the scriptures but not really let them sink deep into their hearts. Their study may be only a surface-level experience, not the deep studying, pondering, or applying of the *word* that those who hold fast to the *word* do.

This distinction between these two groups who come to the tree is further supported by a comparison with the types of soil in the Savior’s parable of the sower found in Matthew 13. In the parable, the seed is compared to the *word*. There are four soils in the parable, as there are four groups of people in Lehi’s dream.

The soil by the wayside, which is hard and compacted and doesn’t allow seed to get root, is like those who head directly toward the spacious building without a thought for scriptures or coming to Christ (see Matthew 13:4; 1 Nephi 8:31–34). The seed that fell among thorns is soon choked out by the cares and temptations of the world, as are those who commence in the path but are soon lost in the mist of darkness (see Matthew 13:7; 1 Nephi 8:21–23; 12:17). The seed in the third group falls on “stony places” (Matthew 13:5). In the early spring it would be difficult to tell much difference between plants in the stony soil and those in more fertile soil. However, when the summer heat comes and deeper roots are needed to obtain life-sustaining moisture, the plant in the stony soil withers and dies. So it is with those who have been merely *clinging*

to the rod. The fourth type of soil is the “good ground” (Matthew 13:8). It is deep, rich, and fertile.

The parallels between these last two types of soil and Lehi’s dream continue. When those who have been “continually holding fast to the rod” arrive at the tree, they fall down as they partake of the fruit (see 1 Nephi 8:30). Furthermore, when those in the spacious building mock and ridicule them, they “[heed] them not” (1 Nephi 8:33). On the other hand, the group that had been clinging to the rod does not fall down as they partake of the fruit, and by and by they become embarrassed and are lost. Comparing this group to the stony ground, they had received the *word* with joy but did not have deep, personal, spiritual roots. So these people endure for a while until persecutions arise and they are offended “because of the *word*” (Matthew 13:21; emphasis added). Those who fall down at the tree before partaking of the fruit obviously understand more profoundly the significance of the fruit they are about to partake of and recognize in whose presence they actually are.

Nephi would later be shown that the underlying message of Lehi’s dream is that the history of the world revolves around what nations do with the *word* which is in Christ (see 1 Nephi 11–14). He saw that when the *word* is lost or corrupted, men and nations stumble spiritually (see 1 Nephi 13:29–34).

Lessons Learned—Misuse of the *Word*

In spite of all the careful planning and preparation by the Lord to enable His children to have the *word*, many refuse to receive or accept it, and some twist and distort what portion of the *word* they do have. Throughout the Book of Mormon, numerous examples are given that warn of this very problem. The Mulekites, or people of Zarahemla, and the later-generation Lamanites were examples of what may

be expected in a society that is without the benefit of having the *word*. They lost their belief in God, which led to the corruption and decline of their society (see Enos 1:14; Mosiah 10:11–17; Omni 1: 15–17).

A careful reading of Jacob 7 shows how Sherem, who professed belief in the scriptures, was either woefully ignorant of them or was unconscionable in his misrepresentation of the *word* to suit his own purposes (see Jacob 7:10, 19). Furthermore, we learn he was successful in leading many away because of their own failure to search the scriptures (see Jacob 7:23).

The Book of Mormon presents many occasions where people were misled because they failed to understand the *word* (see Jacob 2:23; 3 Nephi 1:24). King Noah and his priests, while claiming to be teachers of the law of Moses, were confronted by Abinadi, who accused them of not applying their “hearts to understanding” the *word* (Mosiah 12:27). The wicked lifestyle of Noah and his priests made it easy for them to ignore the potentially powerful influence of the *word*. The Book of Mormon cites several examples of people who once heard the *word* but who rejected it. The people of Ammonihah, led by priests and lawyers, and later the Zoramites, engaged in wholesale wresting or twisting and distorting of the *word* to suit their personal agendas (see Alma 13:20; 41:1).

General wickedness is another outcome expected when people abandon the *word*. Often coupled with wickedness, anger comes toward those who promulgate or adhere to the *word*. Such was the case of the Zoramites in Alma’s time and the Nephites in Samuel the Lamanite’s day (see Alma 35:3; Helaman 13:26). We repeatedly see that both the teacher and the hearer are negatively affected by the hearer’s ignorance of the *word*. Samuel suffered multiple attempts on his life among the Nephites because

they rejected him and the *word* he brought (see Helaman 14:10; 16:2). Alma, Amulek, and the sons of Mosiah suffered greatly at the hands of apostate Nephites because of their *words* (see Alma 14:10–26; 31:31–33). From the Book of Mormon we learn that when one rejects or neglects the scriptures and the *words* of living prophets, it generally leads to misunderstanding, deception, anger, wickedness, indifference, and a loss of faith.

Purposes of the *Word*

The Book of Mormon outlines several purposes and uses of the *word*. Both Lehi and Nephi saw that the *word*, as represented by the rod of iron, would lead people to the tree of life, which was a representation of Christ and His love (see 1 Nephi 11:4–7, 25–27). Nephi explained that he used the *words* of Isaiah to more fully persuade his people to believe in Christ.

Through instructions given by Nephi to his brothers, we learn that the *word* pricks the conscience of the guilty and that it “cutteth them to the very center” (1 Nephi 16:2). We are told that those who hold fast to the *word* will find that the temptations and fiery darts of the adversary are not able to overpower them (see 1 Nephi 15:23–25).

Mormon editorialized about the significance of the *word*. He indicated that anyone who desires may “lay hold upon the *word*” (Helaman 3:29; emphasis added). He explained three reasons why one would benefit from possessing and using the *word*. First, because the *word* is alive and powerful, it can help people cut through all the cunning traps and trickery of the adversary. This is valuable because Satan’s tactics are numerous, diverse, and deceptive. Second, the *word* will help “lead the man of Christ” across the “everlasting gulf of misery” (Helaman 3:29). Satan’s objective is to drag all who will follow him into a state of

misery like his own (see 2 Nephi 2:27). It appears from Mormon’s imagery that it does not matter which direction a person departs from the path—the ultraliberal left or the ultraconservative right—because the tragic outcome will be the same. Third, the *word* is designed to “land” one’s soul “at the right hand of God” (Helaman 3:30). It is clear the ultimate purpose of the *word* is to chart for us the course that will lead us back to the Father, where we can enjoy the association of our families and all the great and faithful people of the past.

The image of Lehi’s Liahona was used by Alma the Younger to illustrate another purpose for the *word*. He taught that just as the Liahona led Lehi and his people to the promised land, so would the *words* of Christ lead anyone who followed them to a “far better land of promise,” even eternal life (Alma 37:45). Affirming this principle, Moroni explained that newly baptized members needed to be “nourished by the good *word* of God, to keep them in the right way” (Moroni 6:4; emphasis added). Clearly, the Book of Mormon emphasizes the importance of the *word* in helping those who are willing to stay on the path that leads to exaltation. Is it any wonder that Nephi pleaded with his people and future readers to feast “upon the *word* of Christ, and endure to the end”? If they would, he promised, “Thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20; emphasis added).

The usefulness of the *word* is broad. It is clear that Nephi understood that the purpose for which people might use the *word* to assist or direct them is not limited. Indeed, he declared that “the *words* of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3; emphasis added). Affirming this principle, President Boyd K. Packer explained that if one is “acquainted with the revelations, there is no question—personal or social or political or

occupational—that need go unanswered. Therein is contained the fulness of the everlasting gospel. Therein we find principles of truth that will resolve every confusion and every problem and every dilemma that will face the human family or any individual in it.”³

Effects of the *Word*

Within the pages of the Book of Mormon we discover many effects that can come as a result of diligent and persistent study of the *word*. Samuel the Lamanite explained what he had experienced, as well as witnessed, regarding the effects of the *word*. A study of the *word* can lead to “faith on the Lord, and unto repentance,” which in turn brings about “a change of heart” (Helaman 15:7) to those who value the *word*. This change of heart is no small matter, according to the Book of Mormon. It was the preaching of the *word* that ultimately eliminated the Gadianton robbers from among the Lamanites in Samuel’s day (see Helaman 6:37–38). Aaron and his brothers witnessed repeatedly the effect of a “wicked spirit rooted out” (Alma 22:15) of the hearts of the Lamanites as a result of the preaching of the *word* (see Alma 22:13–18). These changes were not temporary surface-level changes. They were deep and soul changing, a complete forsaking of sins, resulting in the blossoming of a new creature whose nature, or heart, was completely changed. In connection with the repentance and change of heart brought by the *word*, Jacob also explained that the *word* can have the powerful effect to “[heal] the wounded soul” (Jacob 2:8). The *word* can also have the dual effect of healing the souls of those who have been offended or victimized and afflicting the souls of those who think they are whole but whose consciences need to be pricked (see Jacob 2:9–11).

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Through the lives of the sons of Mosiah, we see that prayerful study of the *word* has a powerful effect to help one remain faithful in one’s testimony and enables one to teach with “power and authority” (Alma 17:2–3). Not only was the effect of the *word* powerful upon the sons of Mosiah, but those converted among the Lamanites made such life-altering changes that Mormon records that they “never did fall away” (Alma 23:6). Furthermore, Alma the Younger explained that a lifetime of nourishing the *word* will result in spiritual fruits that are “sweet above all that is sweet . . . and pure above all that is pure” (Alma 32:42). These sweet, pure fruits are manifest repeatedly in the Book of Mormon, particularly when loving parents teach the *word*. It was the *word* taught by Alma the Elder that helped catalyze the dramatic reform of his son Alma (see Alma 36:17–18). Helaman’s stripling warriors were driven by faith and commitment instilled in their hearts by the *word* their mothers taught (see Alma 56:47–48). The detailed doctrinal explanations of the *word* by Alma were critical in the spiritual reform of his son Corianton (see Alma 39–42). Nephi and Lehi, sons of Helaman, were willing to put their lives on the line as missionaries, in part because of the powerful *words* their father had taught them (see Helaman 5). The entirety of the Book of Mormon shows the positive effects that come when one uses the *word* and the ill effects that occur when one abuses the *word*. From the Book of Mormon, we see that among the effects of hearkening to the *word* are conversion, understanding, power, peace, joy, and happiness.

The effects of the *word* are blessings that can come to us only in one way. As President Ezra Taft Benson explained, “However diligent we may be in other areas, certain blessings are to be found only in the scriptures, only in coming to the *word* of the Lord and holding fast

to it.”⁴ When we are faithful and diligently obedient to the *word*, our *word* becomes powerful even, when necessary, to shake or stun others (see 1 Nephi 17:48–54), to bring famine (see Helaman 10:5; 11:4–5), to move mountains (see Ether 12:30), and even to do all things that are necessary (see 1 Nephi 17:50).

Prophetic Promises and Warnings

The Book of Mormon records numerous prophetic promises and warnings concerning the *word* in the latter days. The first of these concerns promises that the *word* will be preserved. Nephi was promised that the preservation of the plates of brass would help a whole nation avoid perishing (see 1 Nephi 4:13). These plates, Alma prophesied, would miraculously “retain their brightness,” as would all plates which contain holy scripture (see Alma 37:5). The Lord promised Lehi and Nephi that the *word* would “hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people” (2 Nephi 29:2; emphasis added). Likewise, Enos was informed that the Lord would preserve a record of his people to come “forth at some future day” (Enos 1:13). Both Mormon and Moroni testified that they knew that people in the latter days would have the *words* which they had written or compiled (see Mormon 5:12–13; 9:30). Any Nephite prophet who had studied the *words* of his predecessors knew that the Lord would make important use of the spiritual accounts they were keeping.

The Book of Mormon not only indicates that the *words* of the Nephite prophets would be preserved but also explains reasons for their preservation. One of the major reasons for the preservation of the Nephite record was shown to Nephi. He saw clearly in vision that so much of what was plain and precious concerning the Lamb of God, His covenants, and His gospel would be lost or corrupted

(see 1 Nephi 13:25–29). Nephi was shown that plain and precious things would be taken away to “pervert the right ways of the Lord” and to “blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men” (1 Nephi 13:27). After a vision of the latter days, Moroni rhetorically asked those he saw, “Why have ye transfigured [changed in form] the holy *word* of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls?” (Mormon 8:33). The understanding was given clearly to Nephite prophets that their record would be necessary to help restore plain and precious truths that would be lost over time.

In addition to the loss of plain and precious truths, the Lord revealed that many would resist this new revelation of the *word*. Nephi and Moroni were shown that people would mock their *words* and declare that all of the *word* of the Lord they need is found in the Bible (see 2 Nephi 29:3; Ether 12:25). Speaking prophetically to those he had seen in vision in the latter days, Moroni cautioned them against criticizing the *word* because of his or his predecessors’ imperfections (see Mormon 9:31).

The importance of the *word* found in the Book of Mormon is clearly illustrated by the prophetic declaration of the Savior. To the faithful Nephites, He declared that the great sign of the commencement of the latter-day gathering of Israel would be the coming forth of His *words* in the Book of Mormon (see 3 Nephi 21:1–3; Ether 4:17). In addition to being a clear sign of the gathering, Nephi was shown that the Book of Mormon would be a key part of the latter-day *word* that would establish the truthfulness of the Bible and “make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away” (1 Nephi 13:40). This latter-day *word* would be critical in helping those who are stumbling spiritually and doctrinally (see 1 Nephi 13:34–36). Mormon taught that the Nephite *word* would go forth in

the Lord's "own due time" (Mormon 5:12), with the specific purpose of persuading all "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mormon 5:14).

Even with the gospel light that would come forth and the blessings this *word* would bring, the Savior made it clear that there were much greater portions of His *word* that could come forth. The portion of this latter-day *word* we have received is considered to be the "lesser part." Yet if we will be faithful and use wisely what the Lord has brought forth first, then will "greater things be made manifest" unto us. However, if we are not faithful, greater portions of the *word* will "be withheld . . . unto [our] condemnation" (3 Nephi 26:8–10). In light of this, it is wise to reflect upon the council, cautions, and encouragement we have received from latter-day prophets. President Benson expressed the following concern:

We have not been using the Book of Mormon as we should. . . .

Some of the early missionaries, on returning home, were reproved by the Lord in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants because they had treated lightly the Book of Mormon. As a result, their minds had been darkened. The Lord said that this kind of treatment of the Book of Mormon brought the whole Church under condemnation. . . . (See D&C 84:54–57.) Are we still under that condemnation? . . .

Do eternal consequences rest upon our response to this book? Yes, either to our blessing or our condemnation.

Every Latter-day Saint should make the study of this book a lifetime pursuit. Otherwise he is placing his soul in jeopardy and neglecting that which could give spiritual and intellectual unity to his whole life.⁵

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In explaining the rod of iron to his brothers, Nephi declared that it was a representation of “the *word* of God; and whoso would hearken unto the *word* of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 15:24; emphasis added). Nephi saw in vision the reality of this statement played out multiple times over the history of the world. In our time similar counsel has been given by latter-day prophets. Pleading with the Saints in our day, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared: “Without reservation I promise you that if you will prayerfully read the Book of Mormon, regardless of how many times you previously have read it, there will come into your hearts an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord. There will come a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to his commandments, and there will come a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.”⁶

Nephi’s promise that faithfully “holding” to the *word* will keep us safe from the temptations of the devil and from being led into forbidden paths brings us back to where we began. It was the Savior who prophesied that “whoso treasureth up my *word*, shall not be deceived” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37; emphasis added). A careful study of the Book of Mormon reveals that this is one of its major purposes. It is a book about the *word*, its importance, and how to use it. Nephi and Moroni both testified in plainness that the day would come when all would know that their *words* were “the *words* of Christ” and that we would see them at the judgement bar, where Christ Himself would declare the authenticity, authority, and power of the *words* of this great book (see 2 Nephi 33:10–11; Moroni 10:27–28). To those who reject, ignore, or trivialize these *words*, the day is coming when they will know that Nephi,

Mormon, Moroni, and the others told the truth. To them, Nephi bid a solemn and somber “everlasting farewell, for these *words* shall condemn you at the last day” (2 Nephi 33:14; emphasis added).

The purpose of the Book of Mormon is ultimately to testify of and bring people to Christ. He is the *Word*. Through Him we are shown the way we must go and the kind of lives we must live. His meticulous efforts to ensure that this record, the Book of Mormon, was preserved and reserved to come forth in the latter days is a testament to the indispensable *word* it contains. The question is thus appropriately asked and answered: “What then is the power of the Book of Mormon? It will proclaim the everlasting gospel; it will gather Israel; it will build the New Jerusalem; it will prepare a people for the Second Coming; it will usher in the Millennium—at least it will play such an important part in all of these that its value and power can scarcely be overstated.”⁷

Notes

1. Neal A. Maxwell, “Lessons from Laman and Lemuel,” *Ensign*, November 1999, 6.

2. Supporting what Elder Maxwell taught in the previous citation, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explained, “As the Spirit revealed to Nephi the explanation of the vision his father had seen, the Spirit made explicit that the Tree of Life and its precious fruit are symbols of Christ’s redemption” (Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997], 160).

3. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach the Scriptures*, address to Church Educational System full-time religious educators, October 14, 1977 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 5.

4. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 82; emphasis added.

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5. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God,” *Ensign*, May 1975, 63.

6. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 41.

7. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 171.

