

---

## PREFACE

THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THE Book of Mormon was completed only a few days before the Church was organized. At that time, the Lord revealed that this book “contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also; . . . proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old; thereby showing that he is the same God yesterday, today, and forever” (D&C 20:9–12).

Before the revelation was received for priesthood quorums, before the vision of the three degrees of glory, before knowledge of vicarious work for the dead, and before Joseph Smith was instructed to begin an inspired translation of the Bible, the Book of Mormon was received as scripture for all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In surveying the great truths that God had restored to the earth, Joseph Smith declared that “the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion” (introduction to the Book of Mormon).

As the “keystone” containing a “fulness of the gospel,” the Book

of Mormon connects, enhances, and clarifies the other standard works. The Book of Mormon firmly establishes the core doctrines of the gospel. President Ezra Taft Benson explained that the “fulness of the gospel” does not mean that the Book of Mormon “contains every teaching, every doctrine ever revealed. Rather, it means that in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation. The Book of Mormon offers so much that broadens our understandings of the doctrines of salvation. Without it, much of what is taught in other scriptures would not be nearly so plain and precious” (*A Witness and a Warning* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988], 18–19).

The purpose of this volume is to explore core doctrines and teachings found in the Book of Mormon to bring the reader to a greater realization and appreciation of the book’s transcending worth. Each author has combined testimony with scholarship to provide insights, applications, and connections to gospel truths. Essays on the Fall of man and the Atonement of Jesus Christ are included as two foundational doctrines. Also addressed in this work are articles on the nature and function of covenants, the simplicity evident in accessing repentance through faith in Christ, the importance of our works in conjunction with Christ’s grace, and the uses and abuses of moral agency.

Topics such as the identity of the “Gentiles,” Isaiah’s writings as understood by the Nephites, Christ’s role as “Father,” and the meaning of the phrase “plain and precious truths” receive elucidation among the included essays. Other articles address such timely subjects as war among people of God, parenting in a challenging world, recognizing God’s mercy, showing mercy ourselves through forgiveness, and deciphering the fine line between hedonism and holiness. One essay surveys the entire Book of Mormon by suggesting a much broader understanding for the “wise purpose” of this book of scripture than what is typically seen.

Collectively, the articles in this volume point to the central and pivotal role of our Savior, Jesus Christ. They encourage the reader

*Preface*

ix

to have greater faith in Christ through the witness of the Book of Mormon. They reconfirm the unparalleled invitation to come unto Christ and become like Him.

We gratefully acknowledge the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University for their expertise in copyediting, proofreading, and preparing this volume for publication.

We hope that this volume will encourage all who read to discover and rediscover for themselves that the Book of Mormon does indeed contain the fulness of the gospel.

The 2003 Sidney B. Sperry Symposium Committee

Camille Fronk

Brian M. Hauglid

Patty A. Smith

Thomas A. Wayment