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## Everyman's Vital Questions

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**Abstract:** The Book of Mormon is "doctrinally relevant" in today's world as it provides answers to vital questions concerning Christ's divinity, mission, resurrection, the essential nature of baptism, the power of the Holy Ghost, God as a God of miracles, and the reality of a final day of judgment.

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An "in" word today is relevant. We often hear that "religion should be relevant," or "our challenge is to make the message of Christ relevant to twentieth-century man." The Book of Mormon is doctrinally relevant, and in it we find the answers to . . .

## EVERYMAN'S VITAL QUESTIONS

by Joe J. Christensen\*

Today some young people (and old ones, too, for that matter) are dropping out of organized religions because they do not find relevant, satisfying, or meaningful answers to life's most pressing questions. Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike in a recent article noted:

*The dropout crisis in both organized religion and organized society has become alarmingly clear during the past year. Young people—hundreds of thousands of them—have dropped out. They are*

(For Course 17, lessons of April 28 and May 5, "Corianton" and "Moroni vs. Zerahemnah"; for Course 19, lessons of April 21 and May 5, "The Gospel as a Way of Life" and "Eternal Nature of Covenants and Ordinances"; for Course 25, lesson of March 31, "Greater Love Hath No Man"; for Course 27, lessons of March 10 and May 19, 26, "Come Unto Christ," "The Role of the Prophet," and "Overcoming Through Christ"; for Course 29, lessons of May 5 and 19, "The Book of Mormon"; to support family home evening lesson 28; and of general interest.)

*defiant, cynical, and apparently have given up all hope.<sup>1</sup>*

So many today seek what they consider to be real, relevant answers to life's perplexing problems. Almost every Christian desires satisfying answers to the question, "Who am I, and how do I relate to God, Christ, life here, and the hereafter?" Even though the Book of Mormon account spans more than two thousand years, it contains doctrinally consistent messages that are relevant in our nuclear age. Let us consider a few of them.

### CHRIST'S DIVINITY AND MISSION

The divinity of Christ is challenged as much today as ever, yet one who receives a testimony of the validity of the Book of Mormon is confident of Christ's divinity. Literally from the frontispiece to the final page, powerful support is presented. The fact that Jesus is the Christ is one of its central messages. Prophetic visions of Christ's birth and mission are recorded by Nephi (1 Nephi 11:13-24); unusual signs at the time of his birth and death are predicted by Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 14:3-6 and 14:26-29); his life and resurrection are prophetically outlined in King Benjamin's magnificent sermon (Mosiah 3:3-11). That Jesus Christ would be central to man's salvation was preached, prophesied, and written by Nephi more than five centuries before the Savior's birth, as indicated by this beautiful section:

*For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.*

*And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled.*

*And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy 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. (2 Nephi 25:23, 24, 26.)*

### RESURRECTION

Some people today seriously question whether Christ was literally resurrected. In fact, most who have been influenced by the movement to "demythologize" the scriptures question whether the empty tomb was actually an historical fact.<sup>2</sup> The Book of

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<sup>1</sup>"Religion and Rebellion," by James A. Pike, *Psychology Today*, August, 1967, pages 45-49. Quoted by permission.

<sup>2</sup>See *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, volume 3, "Mythology," especially page 488.

Mormon sheds refreshing light and conviction in this major area of man's concern. Jesus did die and come to life again, and with power the book testifies that all men will live again!

The Prophet Jacob, Lehi's son, elaborates on the reasons for the resurrection more than five hundred years before it actually occurred. (See 2 Nephi 9: 6-14.) Amulek and Alma both discuss the concept of a universal resurrection in which the wicked as well as the righteous will be resurrected. (See Alma 11:41-45; and Alma 40.) Yet undoubtedly the most impressive evidence of Christ's resurrection was his own personal appearance on this hemisphere. If anyone desires to have a thrilling spiritual and scriptural experience, let him turn to 3 Nephi, chapters 11 to 26 inclusive, and read of the Savior's appearance to those assembled in the land Bountiful. The resurrected Jesus was introduced by his Father as follows:

*Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.* (3 Nephi 11:7.)

Jesus stretched forth his hand and said:

*Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.* (3 Nephi 11:10.)

Later, the Savior offered the Nephites the same tangible witness to his resurrection that he had extended to his disciples in Palestine, with the following invitation:

*Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.* (3 Nephi 11:14.)

### BAPTISM, AN ESSENTIAL

In spite of the fact that Jesus said, ". . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John 3:5), many hold that the ordinance of baptism is no longer significant to man's salvation. However, baptism finds a consistent emphasis throughout the Book of Mormon. The earliest formal mention of baptism occurs before one has finished reading 16 pages of the Book of Mormon. (See 1 Nephi 10:9.) It is reiterated with moving, prophetic, historical, and logical reference throughout the entire record. A few moving passages concerning baptism are:

(1) Nephi's discussion of why the Savior was to be baptized and the importance of baptism for everyone is found in 2 Nephi 31:

*And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need*

*have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!* (2 Nephi 31:5.)

(2) Christ's own admonition to *all* to be baptized was one of his first messages after his appearance on this hemisphere. (3 Nephi 11:17-35.) Note two verses:

*And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.* (3 Nephi 11:33, 34.)

(3) From Mormon's epistle to his son Moroni comes the impressive logic denouncing the practice of infant baptism:

*Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me.*

*And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.* (Moroni 8:8, 9.)

We can turn to the scriptures contained in the Book of Mormon and find there a rich, consistent source of answers to life's most pressing questions: Yes, Jesus is divine, he did rise from the dead and break the bands of death for *all* mankind; he is our Savior through his grace, and our exemplar and teacher through the great messages and ordinances he taught.

In this era of unrest, deep concern, and spiritual dropouts, the Book of Mormon can help us find the answers to what the psychologist Carl Jung<sup>3</sup> calls "everyman's question"—"Who am I and how do I relate to that which is infinite and ultimate?" And to the answer, another beautiful Book of Mormon scripture is relevant:

*And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.*

*Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope. And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.*

*If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is accounted on following page.)*

<sup>3</sup>Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961)—prominent Swiss psychiatrist (considered by some to be second only to Sigmund Freud) and first president of the International Psychoanalytic Association. His writings contain a mystical and religious emphasis. Among other published works are *Psychology and Religion* (1938) and *Integration of a Personality* (English translation 1939).

**EVERYMAN'S VITAL QUESTIONS** (Concluded from preceding page.)

ceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth.

Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen. (Moroni 7:41-48.)

**EXAMPLES OF VITAL DOCTRINES CONSISTENTLY TAUGHT THROUGHOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON**

DOCTRINE OR PRINCIPLE	BEFORE CHRIST'S BIRTH	DURING AND AFTER CHRIST'S MINISTRY
The Divinity of Christ's Birth, Mission, and Atonement	1 Nephi 10:4-14 11:12-34 19:6-10 2 Nephi 25:16-29 Mosiah 3:5-18 15:1-9, 23 16 (entire chapter) Alma 7:7-12	3 Nephi 11:3-12 Mormon 7:10 9:1-3 Moroni 7:16 8:8 9:22-26
Resurrection	2 Nephi 9:4-13 Mosiah 15:20-26 26:23-26 Alma 40 (entire chapter) 41:2-5 Helaman 14:16, 17	3 Nephi 23:8-10 26:5 Mormon 9:13 Moroni 7:41
Baptism, a Vital Ordinance	1 Nephi 10:9, 10 Mosiah 18:8-16 2 Nephi 31:5-17 Alma 7:15	3 Nephi 11:21-28 12:1 19:12 21:6 Moroni 6:1-4 8 (entire chapter)
The Power of the Holy Ghost	1 Nephi 10:17-19 13:37 2 Nephi 26:13 28:31 32:3 33:1 Jacob 7:12, 13, 17 Alma 7:10	3 Nephi 21:2 29:6 Moroni 3:4 6:4-9 7:36, 44 8:7 10:4-7
God, a God of Miracles	2 Nephi 10:4 26:13, 20 27:23 28:5, 6 Mosiah 3:5 8:18 15:6 Alma 26:12	3 Nephi 17:7-9 4 Nephi 13, 30 Mormon 8:26 9:7-26 Moroni 7:33-38 10:7-26
Final Day of Judgment	2 Nephi 9:22 Mosiah 3:24 Alma 33:22 Helaman 8:25 12:3-26	3 Nephi 28:32, 40 Mormon 6:16-22 Moroni 10:34

NOTE: A student of the Book of Mormon may find the location of additional doctrines and references by turning to:

1. George Reynolds, *A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon*, Edited and arranged by Philip C. Reynolds; Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1957.

2. William E. Berrett, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*; Deseret News Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1952.  
3. Glen L. Pearson and Reid E. Bankhead, *A Pin-Point Marking Guide to the Book of Mormon*; Bookcraft, Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah, 1961.

Library File Reference: BOOK OF MORMON.