



Type: Magazine Article

In the Mouth of Two or Three Witnesses

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Source: *The Instructor*, Vol. 99, No. 8 (August 1964), pp. 328-329

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: The Book of Mormon is a witness of Christ. In accordance with the ancient biblical law of witnesses, the Book of Mormon complements the Old and New Testaments with its teachings and truths.

In the Mouth of Two or Three Witnesses

by Richard O. Cowan

In a court of law a man's life or property may depend on the testimony of two or three witnesses. As a historian seeks to reconstruct the past, the best he can do is to rely on the testimony of witnesses. Testimonies of witnesses, both ancient and modern, form an important segment of the foundation upon which we build our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Four New Testament witnesses wrote accounts of the life of the Saviour as they knew it. Each wrote from a different point of view, so each account contributes information and insight not found in the others.

Matthew was one of the Twelve and a former Publican and Roman tax collector. Because the Jewish people hated paying taxes to foreign overlords, the Publicans were a resented and despised class. Matthew, the former Publican, wanted to convince his Jewish audience that Jesus was the Christ, so this Gospel is full of instances in which the Lord fulfilled prophecies concerning the coming Messiah.

Mark, according to tradition, was a disciple of Peter; and this gospel reflects the latter's testimony of Christ. As Peter appears to have been a man more of action than of contemplation, even so is Mark the most brief of the four gospels and emphasizes the narrative of the Saviour's deeds.

Luke was probably a Greek physician; he carefully researched the life of Christ and then reported only those things which could be most certainly believed. (*Luke 1:1-4.*) Writing to Theophilus, Luke included in his narrative items having a broad range of interest.

John was perhaps the last of the four gospels to be written, so this account appears to emphasize phases of the Lord's ministry not stressed in the earlier accounts. John highlighted events of the week preceding the crucifixion and taught the doctrine of Christ's pre-earthly existence.

Old Testament prophets looked forward to the Lord's mortal advent:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign;

(For Course 4, lesson of October 25, "The Bible Is a Record"; for Course 6, lesson of October 4, "Jesus, the Son of God, Is the Head of This Church"; and for Course 14, lesson of November 3, "Some Appearances of the Risen Lord"; and of general interest.)

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6.)

Book of Mormon prophets proclaimed:

And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God. (Alma 7:10.)

The Bible records many of the events of the Lord's mortal ministry from the time of His birth to His ascension into heaven 40 days after the resurrection. The Book of Mormon records in 3 *Nephi* many events during the Lord's visit to His "other sheep" (*John 10:16*) in America. The Saviour repeated the Sermon on the Mount and other significant portions of the teachings He had given in the Holy Land. The Book of Mormon record of these sayings thus constitutes a witness to the truthfulness of the biblical account. In many instances, furthermore, the Book of Mormon gives a more complete account and often throws new light on the meaning of passages found in the New Testament. These two witnesses, therefore, not only sustain each other in bearing testimony of Christ, but also complement each other in giving us a greater understanding of His Gospel.¹

In these last days the Lord has again made Himself known. Revelations opening the dispensation of the fulness of times have been compiled and are found in the Doctrine and Covenants, the modern witness for Christ.

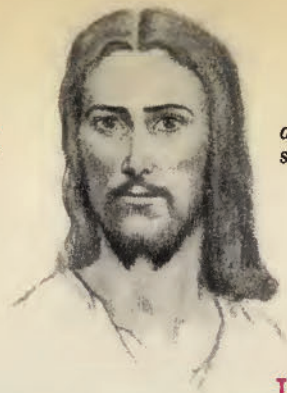
Latter-day Saints should be grateful for the additional witnesses of the Saviour. These scriptures ought to be constantly studied and thoroughly learned by all who love the Lord and wish to pattern their lives after His Gospel. Still another witness is available to those who would have a testimony of Jesus Christ. To those who search the scriptures, the Lord has promised:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:4.)

¹For a comparison of doctrinal teachings in the Bible and Book of Mormon see "In the Mouth of Two Witnesses," by Richard O. Cowan, *The Instructor*, July, 1960, page 247, and accompanying inside back cover chart.
Library File Reference: Jesus Christ—Divinity.

Witnesses For Christ

"... In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."¹



"When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves." (Doctrine and Covenants 130:1.)

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS:

ABRAHAM:

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram. . . ." (Genesis 17:1, 18:1, 26:2-5. See also *Abraham* 2:6.)

JACOB:

"... I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." (Genesis 32:30; see also 28:12, 13, and 35:9.)

MOSES:

"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." (Exodus 24:9, 10. See also 33:10-11, 21-23. See *Moses* 1:1-6.)

SOLOMON:

"... the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time. . . ." (1 Kings 9:2.)

ISAIAH:

"... I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." (Isaiah 6:1. See also 2 Nephi 11:2.)

LATTER-DAY PROPHETS:

JOSEPH SMITH:

"... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!* (*Joseph Smith* 2:17.)

JOSEPH SMITH AND SIDNEY RIGDON:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him. . . ." (Doctrine and Covenants 76:22, 23. See also 130:1.)

JOSEPH SMITH AND OLIVER COWDERY:

"We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber." (Doctrine and Covenants 110:2; see verse 3 also.)

LORENZO SNOW:

"He stood right here, about three feet above the floor. It looked as though he stood on a plate of solid gold." Pres. Snow "described His hands, feet, countenance and beautiful white robes. . . ."²

JOSEPH F. SMITH:

"... the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful. . . ."³

PRES. DAVID O. McKAY:

"I . . . fell asleep and beheld . . . something infinitely sublime. . . . I . . . saw a great concourse of people. . . . Instantly my attention seemed centered upon the Leader, and though I could see only the profile of his features and his body, I recognized him at once as my Saviour! The tint and radiance of his countenance were glorious to behold!"⁴

THE NEW TESTAMENT:

SIMON PETER:

"... Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. . . . Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (*Matthew* 16:16-17. See also *Acts* 10:40, 41.)

THE ELEVEN:

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. . . . And Jesus came and spake unto them. . . ." (*Matthew* 28:16-18. See also *Matthew* 28:9; *Mark* 16:9, 10, 12, 14; *Luke* 24:14-48.)

MARY MAGDALENE:

"Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her." (*John* 20:18.)

THOMAS:

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." (*John* 20:27, 28.)

STEPHEN:

"... Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (*Acts* 7:56.)

PAUL:

"At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun . . . and . . . I heard a voice speaking unto me, . . . And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest . . . I have appeared unto thee . . . to make thee a minister and a witness. . . ." (*Acts* 26:13-16; see also *Acts* 9.)

THE BOOK OF MORMON:

NEPHI AND JACOB:

"... for he (Isaiah) verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him. . . ." (2 Nephi 11:2, 3.)

MORMON:

"... I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus." (*Mormon* 1:15.)

BROTHER OF JARED:

"... Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; . . . and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh." (*Ether* 3:14, 16.)

MORONI:

"And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things." (*Ether* 12:39.)

THE MULTITUDES:

See 3 Nephi 8-28.

¹Doctrine and Covenants 6:28.

²"Modern Witnesses of Jesus Christ," by H. George Bickerstaff; *The Instructor*, March, 1961; page 100.

³"Modern Witnesses of Jesus Christ," page 101.

⁴"Later-day Prophets Receive Revelation Today," by Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr.; *The Instructor*, November, 1963; page 385.