

# “Another Testament of Jesus Christ”

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My brothers and sisters, I am pleased to be with you this evening. I express my gratitude for the beautiful music that has been performed and for the prayers offered in our behalf. I am glad that this telecast is being transmitted by satellite to many locations. I love these occasions when the future leaders and mothers and fathers of the Church gather for worship and learning.

This evening I will speak about a subject of immense importance. Because of my earlier responsibilities, I have given many talks from this pulpit at BYU. Yet I have no hesitancy in saying that this message is the most important I have ever given here.

I speak to you as one of that small group who have been very close to President Ezra Taft Benson during all of the seven and one-half years he has served as our prophet/president. I have been part of virtually every occasion when he and his counselors have met with the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and I have been present on every occasion when he has instructed the General Authorities. I have read all of the books he has written and studied the written text of all of the talks he has given as President of the Church.

From that vantage point I will speak about what all of us understand to be his central message as President of the Church. I refer to why we are encouraged to study and restudy the Book of Mormon.

## I

President Benson’s administration as President of the Church has been punctuated by his repeated and fervent pleas for all of us to study the Book of Mormon on a daily basis for the rest of our lives. For example, in his conference address to the members of the Church in the solemn assembly where he was sustained as President of the Church, he said:

*The Lord inspired His servant Lorenzo Snow to reemphasize the principle of tithing to redeem the Church from financial bondage. . . .*

*Now, in our day, the Lord has revealed the need to reemphasize the Book of Mormon to get the*

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*Church and all the children of Zion out from under condemnation—the scourge and judgment. (See D&C 84:54–58.) This message must be carried to the members of the Church throughout the world. [“A Sacred Responsibility,” Ensign, May 1986, p. 78] (Almost all of President Benson’s words quoted herein are also found in his book *A Witness and a Warning* [Deseret Book Company, 1988].)*

President Benson has often referred to the condemnation that section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants describes as being imposed on the Saints for neglect of the Book of Mormon. This revelation was given to the Church in September 1832, just two and one-half years after the Church was organized. In verses 43–44, the Lord declared:

*And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.*

*For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.*

Verses 45 through 47 affirm the truth of the word of the Lord, the enlightenment given to all by the Spirit, and the fact that all who hearken to the Spirit come unto God the Father. Verse 48 then refers to the gospel covenant:

*And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world.*

Verses 49 through 53 describe the sin and darkness of those who do not come to God and hearken to his voice.

The succeeding verses, 54–58, describe the circumstances of some early members of the Church.

*And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—*

*Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation.*

*And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all.*

*And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—*

*That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion.*

Along with other General Authorities, I have a clear recollection of the General Authority temple meeting on March 5, 1987. For a year President Benson had been stressing the reading of the Book of Mormon. Repeatedly he had quoted these verses from the Doctrine and Covenants, including the Lord’s statement that the Saints’ conduct had “brought the whole church under condemnation” (D&C 84:55).

In that temple meeting, President Benson reread those statements and declared, “This condemnation has not been lifted, nor will it be until we repent” (remarks by President Ezra Taft Benson, General Authority Temple Meeting, Thursday, 5 March 1987). He also repeated his declaration of a year earlier that, in our day, the Lord has inspired his servant to reemphasize the Book of Mormon to get the Church out from under condemnation (see *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 78).

Along with others, I felt the impact of this declaration of condemnation. As I studied the subject, I was relieved to find that the serious consequences of this condemnation need not be permanent. The use of this term elsewhere in modern revelation suggests that it refers to a punishment or a penalty, not to a permanent banishment (e.g., D&C 82:3). In fact, the words

President Benson quoted invite the Saints to repent of their deficiencies so the condemnation can be removed.

## II

To understand why President Benson has exhorted us to reemphasize the Book of Mormon and why this is necessary to remove us from condemnation, we need to remember the major theme of that book.

In his many messages about the Book of Mormon, President Benson has taught us that the major significance of the Book of Mormon is its witness of Jesus Christ as the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father, who redeems and saves us from death and sin. Of related and equal importance is its explanation of our Savior's atonement, which is the most fundamental doctrine of our faith.

In his conference address in October 1981, President Benson emphasized that the "major purpose" of the record that became the Book of Mormon "is to convince a later generation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" ("Joseph Smith: Prophet to Our Generation," *Ensign*, November 1981, p. 61). Two years after he became President of the Church, he repeated that characterization in a marvelous talk titled "Come unto Christ." There he declared that "the major mission of the Book of Mormon. . . is 'to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ'" (*Ensign*, November 1987, p. 83).

In the General Authority meeting I mentioned earlier, President Benson distributed some materials to assist us in carrying his Book of Mormon message throughout the world. Included in that distribution were copies of the talk he gave in the 1975 April conference, titled "The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God." I underlined these words from that important talk:

*Now, we have not been using the Book of Mormon as we should. Our homes are not as strong*

*unless we are using it to bring our children to Christ. . . . Social, ethical, cultural, or educational converts will not survive under the heat of the day unless their taproots go down to the fulness of the gospel which the Book of Mormon contains. ["The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God," *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 65]*

President Benson has frequently reminded us of the Prophet Joseph Smith's declaration that the Book of Mormon is "the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*HC* 4:461). In a landmark address during the first year of his service as President of the Church, President Benson explained these two ways in which the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion.

*The Book of Mormon is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the cornerstone of everything we do. . . . Its testimony of the Master is clear, undiluted, and full of power. . . .*

*The Book of Mormon is also the keystone of the doctrine of the Resurrection. ["The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign*, November 1986, pp. 5–6]*

Note that both of these ways in which the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion focus on our relationship to Christ—our witness of him and our testimony of his atonement and resurrection.

In addition, President Benson has often reminded us of the Lord's declarations through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Book of Mormon is "the most correct of any book on earth" (*HC* 4:461) and that it "contains . . . the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (*D&C* 20:9). This does not mean that the Book of Mormon contains a full explanation of every principle of the gospel. What it means, President Benson has explained, is that "in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation" (*Ensign*,

November 1986, p. 6). Most significantly, he notes, “It also provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement” (*Ensign*, November 1986, p. 5).

### III

Having reminded ourselves of the major theme and purpose of the Book of Mormon, we can proceed to consider why we have been directed to intensify our study of it at this time.

I have carefully considered all of the reasons President Benson has given for studying the Book of Mormon, including many reasons why it is uniquely important in our day. From this perspective and from my frequent opportunities to listen to him in our council meetings, I will give you my clear impressions of why he has pleaded with us to repent of our neglect of the Book of Mormon.

One reason stands out above all the rest. Expressly and by implication, President Benson has affirmed that this subject is the most important of all. I believe that it was the neglect—the “treating lightly”—of this subject that brought the early Church under condemnation. I believe it is the neglect of this subject that has continued the condemnation in our own day. Though supremely important, this subject is so simple that it is easy for us to neglect it in favor of other things.

The subject I believe we have neglected is the Book of Mormon’s witness of the divinity and mission of Jesus Christ and our covenant relationship to him.

In the opening session of the October 1986 conference, President Benson read the verses from the Doctrine and Covenants about the whole Church being under condemnation and remaining so “until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon” (*Ensign*, November 1986, p. 4; quoting D&C 84:57). In speaking of this, he likened the word *covenant* to *testament*, as in the “New Testament.” He reminded us that the Book of Mormon “is indeed another testament or

witness of Jesus,” adding that this was “one of the reasons why we have recently added the words ‘Another Testament of Jesus Christ’ to the title of the Book of Mormon” (*Ensign*, November 1986, p. 4).

Later in that same message, President Benson repeated these words he had given in an earlier talk. Note the point of emphasis:

*“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. There is a difference between a convert who is built on the rock of Christ through the Book of Mormon and stays hold of that iron rod, and one who is not.”* [“The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, November 1986, p. 7]

That is the key: to use the Book of Mormon to become “built on the rock of Christ”! This book is a testament of Jesus Christ. It explains the significance of his atonement and the content of our covenant relationship with him.

President Benson has stressed this key point again and again in his messages as President of the Church. All of the following are quoted from his words:

*What is the major purpose of the Book of Mormon? To bring men to Christ and to be reconciled to him.* [“A New Witness for Christ,” *Ensign*, November 1984, p. 6]

*The Book of Mormon brings men to Christ. . . . It tells in a plain manner of Christ and His gospel. It testifies of His divinity and of the necessity for a Redeemer and the need of our putting trust in Him.* [“The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God,” *Ensign*, January 1988, p. 3]

*The Book of Mormon is the great standard we are to use. . . . It contains the words of Christ, and its great mission is to bring men to Christ, and all other things are secondary. The golden question of the Book of Mormon is, "Do you want to learn more of Christ?"* [Ensign, January 1988, p. 4]

*No one adequately and properly knows why he needs Christ until he understands and accepts the doctrine of the Fall and its effect upon all mankind. And no other book in the world explains this vital doctrine nearly as well as the Book of Mormon.* ["The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants," Ensign, May 1987, p. 85]

*Do we understand and are we effective in teaching and preaching the Atonement? What personal meaning does the Lord's suffering in Gethsemane and on Calvary have for each of us? . . .*

*Now, what should be the source for teaching the great plan of the Eternal God? The scriptures, of course—particularly the Book of Mormon.* [Ensign, May 1987, p. 85]

*Let us read the Book of Mormon and be convinced that Jesus is the Christ. Let us continually reread the Book of Mormon so that we might more fully come to Christ, be committed to Him, centered in Him, and consumed in Him.* [Ensign, November 1987, p. 85]

We can clearly see the harmony in all of this. The Book of Mormon is Christ-centered. That is its essential feature, and that is the reason we are commanded to study it continually. We must use the Book of Mormon to bring us to Christ. President Benson has tried to drum that message into our consciousness and into our conduct during his entire tenure as President of the Church.

We are not directed to read the Book of Mormon primarily to learn history or geography or politics or ethics or culture or social or educational policy, though it contains valuable teachings on all of those subjects. President

Benson has teachings on many of those subjects, but he has stressed one vital idea above all others: "All truths are not of the same value," he said. "The saving truths of salvation are of greatest worth" ("Worthy Fathers, Worthy Sons," Ensign, November 1985, p. 36). He also said:

*The Book of Mormon was written for us today. . . . The purpose of the Book of Mormon is stated on the title page. It is "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God."* [Ensign, January 1988, p. 3]

#### IV

We can see why President Benson has emphasized the Book of Mormon's witness of Christ if we note carefully what is said to the Church in the verses from section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants that President Benson has quoted so frequently.

In the verses preceding the quote, the Lord commanded the early Saints to heed the words of eternal life and to live by every word that proceeded forth from the mouth of God. He told them that those who came unto God would be taught "of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, . . . for the sake of the whole world" (D&C 84:48). Then he explained that their minds had been "darkened because of unbelief, and because [they had] treated lightly the things [they had] received" (D&C 84:54). The Lord explained that this had "brought the whole Church under condemnation" (D&C 84:55). Then, in the quoted verse, he declared:

*And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written.* [D&C 84:57]

This revelation states that the condemnation can be removed by repenting and remembering “the new covenant.” What is this “new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them” (D&C 84:57)? It is obviously inseparable from the Book of Mormon, as has frequently been said, but it also includes “the former commandments” that the Lord had given his people.

I believe this “new covenant” mentioned in verse 57 is the same as “the covenant” described in verse 48, which the Father teaches and “has renewed and confirmed upon” those who come unto him, all “for the sake of the whole world.” Under this interpretation, the “new covenant,” whose neglect the Lord condemned, was the covenant *contained in* the Book of Mormon and in the “former commandments” the Lord had now renewed and confirmed upon the early Saints. These former commandments must have been the Lord’s prior revelations, as contained in the Bible (the Old and New Testaments) and in those modern revelations already given to the Saints (see *HC* 1:318, 320).

The fundamental doctrinal nature of this new covenant the Saints had “treated lightly” is suggested by the two other revelations that mention the new covenant. Both of these refer to Jesus Christ as “the mediator of the new covenant” (D&C 76:69; 107:19; also see Hebrews 12:24).

This new covenant is frequently mentioned in the scriptures, ancient and modern. Jeremiah prophesied a “new covenant with the house of Israel” (Jeremiah 31:31; also see Hebrews 8:8). The New Testament teaches that Christ was “the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that this covenant was not put in force at the time of Christ’s mortal ministry because Israel rejected him (*Teachings*, pp. 14–15). In a revelation given the same month the restored Church

was organized, the Lord declared, “I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning” (D&C 22:1).

The covenant described in these scriptures, made new by its renewal and confirmation in these latter-days, is our covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. It incorporates the fullness of the gospel (see D&C 66:2, 132:6), which President Joseph Fielding Smith described as “the sum total of all gospel covenants and obligations” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954], 1:156).

From the foregoing it is evident that the “new covenant” contained in the Book of Mormon and the former commandments is that central promise of the gospel, rooted in the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which gives us the assurance of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life if we will repent of our sins and make and keep the gospel covenant with our Savior. By this means, and through his grace, we can realize the fulfillment of the great promise “that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:3).

Thus, the new covenant, the “new and everlasting covenant” the early Saints had received and treated lightly by the time the quoted revelation was given, included all of the commandments and ordinances of the gospel, which are explained most clearly (but not exclusively) in the Book of Mormon. As President Benson has said, “when used together, the Bible and the Book of Mormon confound false doctrines” (*Ensign*, November 1984, p. 8). The Book of Mormon is “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” Its title page identifies its purpose, to explain “the covenants of the Lord” and to convince Jew and Gentile “that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD.”

In declaring how the Saints could be relieved of condemnation for unbelief and for treating this new covenant lightly, the Lord emphasized that the new covenant requires positive action, not just passive commitment. In an inspired statement about temple covenants, Elder John A. Widtsoe explained that a covenant

*is merely a promise to give life to knowledge by making knowledge useful and helpful in man's daily progress. . . . The covenant gives life to truth and makes possible the blessings that reward all those who use knowledge properly.* [Assembly Hall Lecture, 1920, quoted in "Temple Worship," CES Temple Media Kit (Corporation of the President, 1986), p. 6]

This explains why the revelation requires us to "repent and remember the new covenant, . . . not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written" (D&C 84:57). In short, in order to escape condemnation, we must come unto Christ and enter into the gospel covenant, not only "to say" but also "to do according to that which [the Lord has] written." We must "give diligent heed to the words of eternal life" and "live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" (D&C 84:43–44).

## V

We can easily see things in our own day that could cause the Lord to call us to "repent and remember the new covenant" and cause his prophet to declare that the Lord's condemnation has not yet been lifted.

In our own time we are seeing a great increase in the visibility and influence of those who deny or doubt the divinity of Jesus Christ and the need for his atonement. Noting this trend over twenty years ago, President Harold B. Lee declared:

*Now, . . . our greatest responsibility and anxiety is to defend the divine mission of our Lord and*

*Master, Jesus Christ, for all about us, even among those who claim to be professors of the Christian faith, are those not willing to stand squarely in defense of the great truth that our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was indeed the Son of God. So tonight it would seem to me that the most important thing I could say to you is to try to strengthen your faith and increase your courage and your understanding of the place of the Master in the great Plan of Salvation.* [Quoted in Robert J. Matthews, "What the Book of Mormon Tells Us About Jesus Christ," in *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman, from the First Annual Book of Mormon Symposium (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), p. 23]

In my opinion, one of the principal reasons our Heavenly Father had his prophet direct us into a more intensive study of the Book of Mormon is to help us counteract this modern tendency to try to diminish the divinity and mission of our Savior.

Are we as Latter-day Saints doing what we should to counteract this modern trend? Are we aware that our knowledge and testimony of the literal divinity, resurrection, and atonement of Jesus Christ are more distinctive and more needed with each passing year?

I suggest that many Latter-day Saints are not yet aware of our unique position and our special responsibilities to testify of Christ. I suggest that we are not yet doing all we should. I believe this is a sufficient explanation for the condemnation President Benson described and the call to repentance he issued. Here are some illustrations.

A few years ago I received a letter from a man who said he had attended an LDS testimony meeting and listened to seventeen testimonies without hearing the Savior mentioned or referred to in any way. He also wrote that the following Sunday he listened to a priesthood lesson, a Gospel Doctrine lesson, and seven sacrament meeting speakers without

hearing any reference to Jesus Christ (see “Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, November 1990, p. 30). Some may have considered that report an exaggeration or an extreme case. The similar accounts I have received in subsequent letters persuade me that this was not an isolated experience. In too many of our classes, in too many of our worship services, we are not teaching of Christ and testifying of Christ in the way we should. This is one way we are failing to “remember the new covenant.”

To cite another example, I believe that for a time and until recently our public talks and our literature were deficient in the frequency and depth with which they explained and rejoiced in those doctrinal subjects most closely related to the atonement of the Savior. A prominent gospel scholar saw this deficiency in our church periodicals published in a twenty-three year period ending in 1983 (Daniel H. Ludlow observation, cited in Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1989], pp. 3–4). I saw this same deficiency when I reviewed the subjects of general conference addresses during the decade ending in the mid-1980s.

Another illustration is provided by some Latter-day Saint funerals. I attend some funerals and hear reports of many others. Worthy tributes to the deceased are appropriate and so are family memories. But such matters must not dominate an LDS funeral service to the exclusion or neglect of those gospel truths that review the purpose of life and testify of our Creator and Redeemer. At a funeral service—of all places—we must not neglect to testify of him whose gospel gives meaning and purpose to life and whose resurrection and atonement give hope for the deceased and comfort to the bereaved. Yet I know of some LDS funerals in which there was no mention of the Resurrection and no mention of the Savior. Isn’t this an example of “treat[ing] lightly the things [we] have received”? Isn’t this another

cause for some of us to “repent and remember the new covenant”?

Isn’t it possible that we also neglect “the new covenant” and treat the gospel lightly in the daily activities of our lives? Consider this application to campus life. Do some teachers and students create the impression or acquiesce in the impression that salvation is unimportant or that salvation is to be found in academic disciplines? Salvation is in Christ, not in most of the things we do on the BYU campus or anywhere else. In view of that reality, isn’t it appropriate to ask how LDS students and teachers conduct themselves toward the sacred name of Jesus Christ, or his servants, or the scriptures, or his Church, or his commandments when their necessary day-to-day activities interface with those subjects?

All of our important and interesting debates about politics, academic subjects, and educational policy are insignificant by comparison with this. All of our efforts at ethical improvement, desirable as they are, are not sufficient for the salvation that is exaltation.

Have we “treated lightly the things [we] have received” (D&C 84:54)? If we have, I say in soberness that we have need to “repent and remember the new covenant” (D&C 84:57), putting the Savior uppermost in our minds and hearts and showing a higher level of concern for his gospel, his commandments, his Sabbath, his work.

## VI

Fortunately, we are doing better. For more than a decade we have more consciously and more effectively presented ourselves in our true light as followers and servants of Jesus Christ.

In 1982, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve reminded us on the title page of the Book of Mormon that this great book is “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

The First Presidency has requested that we not refer to ourselves as the “Mormon Church,”



but by the name the Lord gave his Church by revelation: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (D&C 115:4).

Our Young Women theme uses a familiar Book of Mormon scripture to pledge that daughters of our Heavenly Father will “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).

Recent LDS gospel scholarship clearly shows a greatly increased emphasis on the Savior and his atonement. Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s multivolume work on the Messiah and his earlier three-volume *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* are landmarks in this effort. We have all benefited immeasurably from the BYU Religious Studies Center’s annual Book of Mormon Symposia, which have placed appropriate emphasis on this scripture’s preeminent position as a witness of Christ. Individual Latter-day Saint scholars, principally in religious instruction at BYU, have published brilliant and inspired books that have made important additions to our literature on the Savior and his atonement (e.g., Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ* [Deseret Book Company, 1992]; Robert L. Millet, *Life in Christ* [Bookcraft, 1990]; Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart* [Deseret Book Company, 1989]). I hope such books are read and pondered, not just purchased and possessed.

President Benson’s emphasis on reading and rereading the Book of Mormon is a heaven-sent refining of emphasis in the lives and gospel study of individual members of the Church. His challenge has been accepted by multitudes of Latter-day Saints and is blessing lives everywhere.

Following the prophet, our General Authorities and auxiliary officers and local leaders have given more frequent and more in-depth attention to our sacred mission of testifying of Christ and explaining the doctrines of his atonement. President Benson and his counselors have set the example in this, and many have followed. Our fine seminary and institute

teachers have likewise been inspired to more effective teaching and witnessing of the Savior.

As a result of President Benson’s teachings, all Latter-day Saints are more conscious of the vital importance of the Book of Mormon in this effort. We are more aware of our duty and privilege to use this book to testify of Christ and to explain the new covenant, the principles and covenants of his gospel.

Our Church leaders and scholars have identified important facts we can use in this effort. For example, the word *atonement* appears only once in the entire New Testament, but twenty-eight times in the text of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is clearly the most profound treatment of this supremely important subject found anywhere (see Boyd K. Packer, “Atonement, Agency, Accountability,” *Ensign*, May 1988, pp. 69–70). The Book of Mormon has nearly one hundred names for the Savior, each expressing some nuance of meaning that enriches our understanding of his divine nature and his mission (see Matthews, “What the Book of Mormon Tells Us,” pp. 32–33). Finally, as President Benson noted in one of his conference talks, “Over one-half of all the verses in the Book of Mormon refer to our Lord. Some form of Christ’s name is mentioned more frequently per verse in the Book of Mormon than even in the New Testament” (*Ensign*, November 1987, p. 83; also see Matthews, “What the Book of Mormon Tells Us,” p. 33).

Fortunately, there are still many God-fearing Christians who join us in testifying of the divinity and mission of Jesus Christ. For some years I have enjoyed sharing one such testimony. In many ways it is a model for each of us who has a duty to testify of Christ. These are the words of the late Malcolm Muggeridge, British author, journalist, and television commentator:

*I may, I suppose, regard myself, or pass for being, a relatively successful man. People*

*occasionally stare at me in the streets—that’s fame. I can fairly easily earn enough to qualify for admission to the higher slopes of the Internal Revenue—that’s success. Furnished with money and a little fame even the elderly, if they care to, may partake of trendy diversions—that’s pleasure. It might happen once in a while that something I said or wrote was sufficiently heeded for me to persuade myself that it represented a serious impact on our time—that’s fulfillment. Yet I say to you—and I beg you to believe me—multiply these tiny triumphs by a million, add them all together, and they are nothing—less than nothing, a positive impediment—measured against one draught of that living water Christ offers to the spiritually thirsty, irrespective of who or what they are. [Sally S. Wright, “The Pilgrimage of Malcolm Muggeridge,” *Chronicles*, December 1992, p. 29, quoting from Muggeridge’s *Jesus Rediscovered*]*

Men and women unquestionably have impressive powers and can bring to pass great things. But after all our obedience and good works, we cannot be saved from death or the effects of our individual sins without the grace extended by the atonement of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon makes this clear. It teaches that “salvation doth not come by the law alone” (Mosiah 13:28). In other words, salvation does not come simply by keeping the commandments. “By the law no flesh is justified” (2 Nephi 2:5). Even those who try to obey and serve God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength are unprofitable servants (see Mosiah 2:21). Man cannot earn his own salvation. He cannot be cleansed by personal suffering for his own sins.

The Book of Mormon teaches: “Since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself” (Alma 22:14). “There can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world” (Alma 34:12; see also 2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:8–16). “Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah. . . . He offereth

himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law” (2 Nephi 2:6–7). Consequently, “there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8). And so we “rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

These teachings obviously stand in opposition to the belief or assumption of some mortals (perhaps even some members of our Church) that they have no need of Christ because they can save themselves by their own works.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we testify with the Book of Mormon prophet-king Benjamin that

*there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.*

*For behold . . . salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ. [Mosiah 3:17–18]*

And so we say to all, in the words the prophet Moroni wrote as a conclusion to the Book of Mormon:

*Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; . . .*

*And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot. [Moroni 10:32–33]*

This is the new covenant, as explained in the Book of Mormon. May we follow the commandment to give diligent heed to these words of eternal life; may we follow our prophet's challenge to remove the condemnation that

comes from treating this new covenant lightly; may we be true to our sacred responsibilities, I pray, even as I testify to the truth of these things, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.