

lr-BoM-1  
The Keystone of Our Religion  
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(Inspirational background: Because the Book of Mormon would be the Keystone of God's Restored Church, the Bible made many prophecies of its coming forth).

I. As had been prophesied, at the death of the apostles, the great apostasy descended upon the Eastern Hemisphere.

A. As prophesied, doctrines and the ordinances were changed after the apostles' deaths.

B. Jesus had warned later church leaders would "[teach] for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:7).

C. Isaiah had earlier warned of the last days, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because **they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant**" (Isaiah 24:5).

1. I discovered personally how these things happened. While pursuing a Master's Degree in Religious Studies, I took a course in "Early Christian Writings." Beginning with the earliest Christians, we read authentic Christian writings left by believers from the very beginning through several centuries. It became obvious through those centuries, the doctrines were changing.

I dared to ask my professor about those changes: "Would not the earliest Christians have considered these later doctrines heresy?" The professor quickly admitted that they would have. But then he said unapologetically, in effect, "**As men's minds developed through the ages, they rejected the more primitive views of the earliest Christians and substituted more rational concepts.**" [In one case he pointed to a scripture which spoke of *embodied* personages from Heaven and laughed, indicating that such beliefs truly were primitive.]

This replacement of God-given faith with man's supposedly greater wisdom is exactly what most Christian churches accept today. But it is also exactly what the ancient prophets had warned of and Jesus condemned.

**And this is exactly what the Father told Joseph Smith *had* happened to traditional Christianity when He and His Son appeared to him in the sacred grove. "They teach for doctrine the commandments of men..." (JS History 19).**

II. Furthermore, as one studies the history of Christianity through the ages, one sees **changes in ordinances, often made to accommodate those changes in doctrine.**

A. Consider changes regarding baptism. It is readily admitted that neither infant baptism nor sprinkling existed in early Christianity, until ***after* the doctrine of original sin was adopted in later centuries.** It was because of this change of doctrine that the baptism of infants was then begun.

To accommodate the baptism of babies, it became necessary to change the *method* of baptism, as it seemed unkind and even dangerous to totally immerse a baby under water. Therefore, baptism was changed to sprinkling rather than immersion.

So both the *age* of baptism and the *method* of baptism were changed to accommodate the changes in doctrine.

While many who sought to reform Christianity recognized the method and age of baptism had been corrupted and they tried to make corrections according to their own

various opinions, they failed to recognize that the doctrine behind it was also corrupt. They continued to accept the false doctrine of original sin, which was not taught by Jesus.

III. In addition to the apostasy, Biblical prophets also foresaw (1) the re-gathering of Israel in the Last Days; (2) a restoration of Christ's true Church among this latter-day Israel, and that (3) **The Book of Mormon would come forth and serve as a catalyst in bringing about these last great events.**

IV. While deliberately made obscure, here are some of the many prophecies of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, to facilitate God's work in the Latter-days.

(When one recognizes the following events are speaking of the Last Days, of the Restoration, and of the Book of Mormon, their meanings become wonderfully clear).

A. Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel saw **the deserted land of Israel** as dead and thus as a valley of dry bones, due to the scattering of its former inhabitants. But he also saw its people, Israel, would again arise as a group. It is significant that immediately following this prophecy is the prophecy that there would be two records --- one of Judah (which is the Bible), and one of Joseph (which is the Book of Mormon). **It would be the latter record, made by descendants of Joseph, which, united with the prophecies of the Bible, would bring about the rejuvenation of Israel. *Ezekiel Chapter 37 is all about the Book of Mormon and its great influence in reviving Israel in the last days.***

B. Isaiah 29:1-3. Isaiah also foresaw the Book of Mormon. He spoke of the time when Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed ("brought down") [in 70 A.D].

But he foretold that **Jerusalem's voice of prophecy would be heard again**, as a "voice speaking from the dust," [i.e., "coming up out of the earth"]. This was fulfilled because the prophet Lehi [of Jerusalem] was led to the Americas before Jerusalem's destruction and preserved. He and his posterity wrote a second witness of God's works and prophecies. They recorded Christ's post resurrectional visit to the Americas. That record, *The Book of Mormon*, would be brought up "out of the dust" to reaffirm the divinity of Jesus Christ to a world whose faith was floundering in the latter-days (Isaiah 29:4).

Isaiah repeated his testimony that the voices of the prophets in ancient Israel would cease (Isaiah 29:10). But he also added that new words of God to a portion of Israel in America (The Book of Mormon) would be delivered to one unlearned (Joseph Smith). By God's "marvelous work," the Book of Mormon would gather scattered Israel, now spiritually deaf and spiritually blind, to hear and see truth again (verses 18-19). **Isaiah 29 is all about the Book of Mormon and its great influence as it speaks to Israel, out of the dust, in the last days.**

C. Judges 15:9-20. Another prophecy about the Book of Mormon is in the story of Samson. Many Biblical scholars recognize there are elements in the life of Samson which paralleled the life of Jesus the Christ. One of the most important is as follows:

After men of Judah bound Samson and turned him over to the Gentiles to be slain (as the Jews would later do to Jesus), **he in turn slew many with the jawbone of an ass.** Jesus is identified with the ass—for it, like He, was meek, despised, and a burden bearer. By choosing to ride into Jerusalem upon an ass, He identified Himself with it. More than one

Biblical scholar has felt **Samson's conquering with the "jawbone of an ass" prophesied of Christ's conquering with His Word, or by His Jawbone** (Irenaeus, John Foxe).

But they did not understand the significance of this event occurring at a place named "Lehi." **The name "Lehi" actually means jawbone or cheek** (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pp. 58-9).

Other scriptures **speak plainly of Christ's power to destroy with His mouth**; it is a "two-edged sword." During His post resurrection visit to the descendants of Lehi, He foretold "...whosoever will not believe in my words [in this case, The Book of Mormon] shall be cut off... And [Israel, including Lehi's descendants] shall be among the Gentiles... as a lion... who treadeth down and teareth in pieces..." (3 Nephi 21:11-12). [Meaning a later, believing Israel would re-inherit God's blessings, while unbelieving Gentiles would be cut off].

In the story of Samson, **the jawbone brought forth water which revived the thirsty** (Judges 15:18). The actual scripture says "God opened up the basin that was at Lehi" (f.19a). Another name given this place was "The spring of him who calls [meaning Christ]." *All of these events and prophecies foretold the spiritual nurturing which would come from Christ through Lehi and his descendants, which would revive "dead and scattered" Israel.*

To summarize: The pre-mortal and resurrected Jesus gave His words (represented by the jawbone) to Lehi's people, doing so in person after He Himself had been betrayed by Judah and slain by the Gentiles. His words to the peoples in the Americas eventually came forth as The Book of Mormon, causing Israel to re-arise, receiving back the inheritance once given to the Gentiles.

**The story of Samson and His reviving jawbone at the place of Lehi was all about The Book of Mormon.**

D. Jeremiah 8:22. The Balm of Gilead. In the area of Gilead there grew in abundance a plant whose gum was known for its healing powers. In foreseeing the scattered and forsaken Israel, Jeremiah lamented that she had no "spiritual" balm to heal her. "Is there no balm in Gilead; ... why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" (Jeremiah 8:22). Though just one simple phrase, these words have been recognized by many to speak of the healing power of Jesus the Christ. Jeremiah, though lamenting, gives implied hope that at some future time the Lord would provide a Balm of Gilead to heal scattered Israel. **And He did!**

**But again, most Christians miss the full message. Gilead was the area inherited partly by the tribe of Manasseh** (Joshua 13:29-31).

*Here is prophecy that the Lord Himself would eventually provide a spiritual healing balm which would come from the tribe of Manasseh*

Israel as a whole is being healed today by The Book of Mormon, a record written by Lehi's descendants who are descendants of Joseph through the tribe of Manasseh. **The true Balm of Gilead is the Book of Mormon.**

V. These scriptures give united testimony as to why The Book of Mormon would be The Keystone of Christ's Church in the Latter-days. The Book of Mormon **has** caused scattered Israel to arise and come together as God's people. Each prophecy adds new details of how God would bring about His latter-day "Marvelous Work and Wonder."