

The Book of Mormon: A Modern Day Parting of the Red Sea
Sacrament Meeting Talk
By Cameron Ford 2008

A few weeks ago I decided that all of my children were at an age where they might enjoy watching the movie, "The Ten Commandments". It was a great teaching opportunity for our family because of all of the questions that arose as they were watching it. As we were watching it I remember how I felt when I watched it for the first time as a young boy. Back then I remember being absolutely amazed at all of the awesome miracles that God had performed for the ancient Israelites. How could even hard-hearted Pharaoh doubt the existence of the true God after he had seen the plagues, the killing of the first born Egyptians, the pillars of fire, the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian armies in the depths of the Red Sea. I thought it was fitting when Pharaoh came back to queen Nefertiri and said, "Moses' god is God". It took him a while, but how could he have come to any other conclusion given the evidence he had seen? How could any rational person who had seen those miracles have concluded that the religion of the Israelite's was not true? Well, as it turns out, we have ample evidence that miracles never seem to have the power to truly convert a person. The Israelites themselves turned away from God and built a golden calf after having seen all of those awesome miracles. Similarly, Laman and Lemuel rebelled against God even after having seen an angel. Miracles can only confirm an already existing faith, but they cannot create faith in the first place.

But none-the-less, I remember as a young boy wondering why God didn't do such grand miracles in our day like the parting of the red sea? Why was it that miracles only happened in ancient times? It wasn't until I was much older that I realized that a miracle on the order of the parting of the Red Sea had been sitting on the book shelves of my home since before I was born.

In 1990 when I was 20 year old, I decided that it was time to find out what all of the fuss was about the Book of Mormon. I had been familiar with the Book of Mormon because my parents had sent me to church when I was younger. My parents were, and are, wonderful people, but religion has never really been their thing. None-the-less, they felt it was important that I get some religious teaching, so they took me to primary and then sent me by myself when I was old enough to go by myself. However, when I became a teenager, girls and sports became much more interesting to me and I decided that the teachings of the church were just the active imagination of different men throughout the ages. It wasn't until some of my friends started leaving on missions, and I felt some

stirrings in my heart at their missionary setting apart's, that I decided to get serious about finding out if there really was any truth to the church's teachings. At that point I allowed for the possibility that it could be true. It wasn't until I softened my heart that the Lord was able to start to work his miracle. After many difficult months of study and prayer, and getting my behavior in line with the gospel, I decided that, although I could not say that I "Knew" the Book of Mormon was true, I believed it to be true. I believed it enough to go on a mission to the Dominican Republic based on that belief. One morning about six months into my mission as I was praying to receive a sure knowledge about the Book of Mormon, I received an answer that was so powerful; it still amazes me to this day. It wasn't until after I had paid the price of sorely repenting, living my life in accordance with the gospel, and putting hundreds of hours of time into study and prayer that I received a sure witness through the power of the Holy Ghost. I have since concluded that a solid, sure and enduring testimony can come in no other way. It has to come by the power of the Holy Ghost. We have to want to know and we have to be willing to pay the price to know. This is how I gained a spiritual witness of the Book of Mormon.

It wasn't until later in life that I discovered that there was actually strong scholarly evidence for the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. What I had learned through the spirit was supported by scholarly evidence? Incredible!

In my humble opinion, anyone who cannot see how the Book of Mormon is a modern day parting of the Red Sea has just not read and studied it carefully enough. Going beyond its spiritual teachings, which are incredible, the authentic details, clues and evidences left by the Book of Mormon writers are mind boggling. How could a young farm boy have forged a book from just his imagination containing ancient forms of Hebrew poetry called Chiasmus that were not found in the English version of the Bible and were not discovered until years later when scholars studied the Old Testament in its original Hebrew? How could a young farm boy have come up with hundreds of never before heard of names, and have those names end up being authentic Hebrew, Egyptian, and Phoenician based names? Several of the never before heard of names such as Nephi and Alma, to name a few, have since been discovered on ancient Jewish documents in the Holy Land. How could a young farm boy have given the exact location and name of an Ancient city on the Arabian Peninsula called Nahom that was passed through by Lehi's family on their way to the ocean, a city that was on no map in Joseph's day and have that city be rediscovered recently exactly where Nephi described it to be. And the things I have mentioned are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to evidences for the Book of Mormon. How could a young farm boy have done all of this? In fact, forget a young farm boy, even if we assumed that Joseph Smith was the greatest

genius the world has ever produced, he still could not have created such a book. It is beyond the realm of possibility that he could have gotten so many details correct just by luck. The only reasonable explanation is that the Book of Mormon came to us exactly as Joseph has told us, from an Angel and translated through the power of God.

The great scholar Hugh Nibley stated in one of his writings:

“Joseph Smith's own story of the book's authorship certainly lies far "outside the usual and familiar," and we have every right to ask for special proof of it. This he obligingly supplies when he puts the book in our hands and asks us how we explain it. Books of Mormon do not occur at all "in the usual course of events." Therefore, we have every right to doubt the book's existence, except for one thing: We have the book. The only alternative to Joseph Smith's explanation is to assume the existence of a forger who at one moment is so clever and adroit as to imitate the archaic poetry of the desert to perfection and supply us with genuine Egyptian names, and yet so incredibly stupid as to think that the best way to fool people and get money out of them is to write an exceedingly difficult historical epic of six hundred pages. Endowed with the brains, perseverance, and superhuman cunning necessary to produce this monumental forgery, the incredibly sly genius did not have the wit to know, after years of experience in the arts of deception, that there are ten thousand safer and easier ways of fooling people than by undertaking a work of infinite toil and danger which, as he could see from the first, only made him immensely unpopular. This is the forger who never existed.”

With so much evidence, I often feel a little guilty because when it comes to the Book of Mormon, I don't have to have faith, I know it is true. As with Pharaoh, how could a rational person come to any other conclusion after having witnessed the miracle of the Book of Mormon? And what is more, unlike the parting of the Red Sea that happened once and then could fade in the memory's of the people, and not be believed by their posterity, the miracle of the Book of Mormon is always here, a daily witness that God exists, that he is concerned for our welfare, that he wants us to be eternal families and to give us all that he has, that he has provided a savior in Jesus Christ to make that possible, and that he has restored his Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Is that knowledge not something to get excited about? To be willing to make sacrifices for? To change our lives for? I certainly think so. And that is why I become so sad when I hear of an investigator or a member that has decided to turn their back on these truths. I just want to shout to them: It is true, it is true, it is true! How can you not see that? But then after some reflection I remember what a high price that I had to pay to receive my

testimony. How much study, effort, and prayer I had to put in before I knew it was true. How I had to soften my heart to be able to allow for the possibility that it could be true, and then I try to be patient and hope that one day they will be able to arrive at the same conclusions that I have. It is my prayer that all of us will come to these same conclusions and live our lives in accordance with that knowledge. Brother and sisters, Joseph was a prophet, Jesus is our redeemer, and this is his restored church. It is true.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen