

THE MORMON CHURCH TELLS CHILDREN THEIR RELIGION started when Jesus, escorted by Heavenly Father, visited 14-year-old Joseph Smith. The boy asked Jesus which church he should join. Jesus told him not to join a church. Years later an angel helped Smith find an ancient sacred book, translate and publish the Book of Mormon, and restart Christ's original, long-lost church, known today as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

That's Chapter 1, "How We Got the Book of Mormon," in the church's *Book of Mormon Reader*, written for very young children. It is also the religion's underlying story to which adult church members subscribe.

In the next 24 short chapters, the book describes in color pictures and brief text some of the people and events found in the Book of Mormon. Take a look:

- 600 years before Christ: God told a family in Jerusalem to leave. So they travelled to the sea, "built a ship, and went to America."

- In America, some people followed one of the family sons, Nephi; these were Nephites. Others followed another son, Laman; these were Lamanites.

- In the pictures, Nephites were dressed in robes, and had paved roads and large buildings. Lamanites "had dark skins" and painted faces, wore loincloths, and lived in primitive tents. Lots of wars!

- A "long time before the Nephites," another group, the Jaredites, had left Babel. "Jesus had told [Jared's brother] to build some boats to go to the promised land."

- "The Jaredites built eight boats. Jesus told Jared's brother "to think of a way to get light" inside the boats. The man collected two stones for each boat and had them

touched by Jesus, which made them shine.

- In the process Jared's brother noted "that men look like Jesus Christ."

- The Jaredite boats drifted many days to a beach in "the promised land." A map sketch suggests it was in South America.

- Back in Jerusalem, Nephi recorded his family's history on gold plates. In America he continued to write. A fellow Nephite, Ammaron also wrote on the plates, and he hid them, confiding only to a 10-year-old boy named Mormon. More wars!

- When Mormon retrieved the gold plates he wrote more on them. Years later, thousands of miles to the north he buried most of the plates in what is now New York, leaving a few with his son, Moroni. Wars ensued again!

- Moroni became the only surviving Nephite. He added to the text, then buried the plates. Joseph Smith said he unearthed and translated the gold plates centuries later (see **Chapter 1**, above).

LINKS: The Mormon church has posted on the Web videos of its stories for children. For a first-hand look: [Old Testament Stories](#) (discussed in [P.S. #42](#)) and [Book of Mormon Reader](#) (or *Book of Mormon Stories*). **BUT WHY BOTHER?** Because for Mormons you know, whether they remember the details or not, these stories are embedded in the new religion invented in America—with its deceptive imitations of Bible accounts and misuse of biblical Christian beliefs and language.