

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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gathered together (1 Ne. 13:41), and “nothing shall be withheld” (D&C 121:28).

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### SCRIPTURE, INTERPRETATION WITHIN SCRIPTURE

The key to interpreting scriptural passages often lies in the body of scripture itself. For example, some passages from the Old Testament receive commentary and interpretation in the New Testament. Jesus Christ frequently taught from the Old Testament, not only giving interpretation—as in David’s need to eat the temple shew bread (1 Sam. 21:1–6) as justification for his disciples plucking wheat on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–26)—but also often emphasizing that the scriptures testify of himself as Messiah (Luke 4:18–21; John 5:39). The additional scriptures that Latter-day Saints accept—the BOOK OF MORMON, the DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS, and the PEARL OF GREAT PRICE—also cite and interpret the Bible. In fact, many of the clearest explications of doctrine arise from modern REVELATIONS or restored scripture.

In the Pearl of Great Price, the BOOK OF MOSES and the BOOK OF ABRAHAM augment the Old Testament Genesis account of the Creation (Moses 2–3; Abr. 4–5), affirm human AGENCY (Moses 3:17; 7:32), clarify the fall of Adam (Moses 4; Abr. 5), and explain the resulting need for a redeemer (Moses 6:59; cf. 4:1–2; 5:7–8). In addition, these two books add information on the claims of Satan and the choosing of Christ in the premortal world (Moses 4:1–4; Abr. 3:27–28) where all the spirits of mankind lived before their advent on the earth (see PREMORTAL LIFE).

In JOSEPH SMITH—MATTHEW, the Prophet Joseph Smith received clarification of the Savior’s discussion in Matthew 24 of the events to precede the fall of Jerusalem and those to precede Jesus’ latter-day coming. According to the JOSEPH

SMITH—HISTORY, MORONI<sub>2</sub> quoted Malachi 4:6 to Joseph Smith differently from the Old Testament version, suggesting that the phrase “the fathers” refers to the patriarchs, especially ABRAHAM, with whom God made covenants pertaining to Abraham’s posterity, who would bear priesthood ORDINANCES to the world for the exaltation of the human family (JS—H 1:39; D&C 27:9–10).

The Book of Mormon clarifies many of the writings of Old Testament prophets. The prophet NEPHI<sub>1</sub> quoted Isaiah 48–49 (1 Ne. 20–21) and then gave a plain commentary on the major points of those chapters in 1 Nephi 22, emphasizing that the NEPHITES were a remnant of scattered Israel, who would eventually be gathered with the aid of the GENTILES. In another example, about 148 B.C. the Nephite prophet ABINADI identified the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53 as Jesus Christ (Mosiah 15:2–5) and enlarged on Isaiah’s discussion of the Messiah’s atonement (Mosiah 14–15).

The Book of Mormon also illuminates the SERMON ON THE MOUNT (Matt. 5–7). In a similar sermon given in the Western Hemisphere (3 Ne. 12–14), the resurrected Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit *who come unto me*” (3 Ne. 12:3; italics added). Such added words, plus the context of Jesus’ address, indicate that one must come to the Savior through BAPTISM and righteousness to receive the blessings promised in the BEATTITUDES.

The Doctrine and Covenants offers explication on several obscure points in the book of Revelation that pertain to events of the Last Days, such as the gathering of Israel and their receiving priesthood ordinances (D&C 77:8–9, 11). Elucidation of biblical passages that focus on latter-day signs to precede Jesus’ second coming are found especially in Doctrine and Covenants 45 and 86. While pondering 1 Peter 3:18–20, President Joseph F. SMITH received a vision of the redemption of the dead (now D&C 138) that clarified and enlarged the Savior’s redemptive work in the SPIRIT WORLD following his crucifixion.

Much modern revelation came to the Prophet Joseph Smith in response to questions arising from his work on the JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE (JST). For example, while meditating on the resurrection to life or damnation mentioned in John 5:29, Joseph Smith and Sidney RIGDON received the revelation on the DEGREES OF GLORY in the resurrection (D&C 76). Joseph Smith recorded several instances in which, while pondering a pas-

sage of scripture (e.g., James 1:5, an invitation to ask the Lord for wisdom), he prayed and received additional scripture from the Lord that made the first more plain or confirmed its reality (JS—H 1:11–20). While translating from the Book of Mormon PLATES, Joseph Smith and Oliver COWDERY prayed after reading about baptism. In answer, JOHN THE BAPTIST came with authority and instructions on baptism (JS—H 1:68–72). After their baptisms, the Prophet described their being filled with the HOLY GHOST: “Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of” (JS—H 1:74).

Nephi observed that having the SPIRIT OF PROPHECY is essential to grasping the correct understanding of scripture. He mentioned in particular Isaiah, “for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy” (2 Ne. 25:4). In chapters 25–30, Nephi provided prophetic insight into the teachings of Isaiah.

Modern revelation and restored scripture offer indispensable interpretations of the Bible, helping Latter-day Saints to understand the Bible more fully. Jesus rebuked those who had taken away the “key of knowledge” or the means whereby the biblical scriptures could be understood (JST Luke 11:53), thereby causing confusion in the interpretation of scripture. The Lord said, “Because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. . . . I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel . . . and they shall write it. . . . And my word also shall be gathered in one” (2 Ne 29:10, 12, 14; cf. Ezek 37:16–20). Latter-day Saints interpret the Bible in the light of restored scripture and modern revelation because these have reestablished the lost key of knowledge.

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## SCRIPTURE STUDY

From childhood, Latter-day Saints are taught to read and study the scriptures in order to know Jesus Christ and his teachings. Those having faith will be able to read by the power of the Lord and hear the Lord’s voice (D&C 18:35–36). They will be given power to expound scripture (D&C 25:7; 97:3–5; 100:11), which includes reasoning with people (D&C 68:1), unfolding and laying open the scriptures to them (Alma 12:1; 21:9; JS—H 1:74), responding to their questions (Alma 12:8–10), explaining what prompted the passage (*TPJS*, pp. 276–77), and likening the messages of the scriptures to their needs (1 Ne. 19:23). Latter-day Saints are to avoid disputation regarding the scriptures and are told particularly to avoid doctrinal contention (D&C 10:62–68; 19:31; 3 Ne. 11:28–40; *HC* 5:340). Missionaries are to read and preach from the scriptures (Alma 18:36; D&C 22:12–13). The resurrected Jesus read chapters of scripture and expounded all things, both great and small, to hearers in the Western Hemisphere (3 Ne. 23:6, 14; 26:1).

Scripture study is central to the teaching activities of the Church and plays a major role in strengthening the spiritual life of the members and in helping them to acquire a TESTIMONY. Members are urged to read and examine the scriptures daily, both individually and as families (Kimball, pp. 2–5). They are instructed to ponder the messages of the scriptures, to pray concerning them, and to relate the teachings to their own lives. Members are cautioned that unless they teach their children the scriptures, they will “dwindle in unbelief”; hence, the Book of Mormon prophets treasured their scriptures and made great effort to obtain them and safeguard them in their travels (1 Ne. 4:5–18; Mosiah 1:4–5).

The current Church curriculum is based on the scriptures, and manuals include scriptural references to aid teachers, provide weekly reading