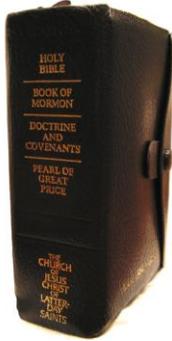


# The Scriptures

Written by Eric Shuster

Founder and Executive Director for the Foundation for Christian Studies



God speaks to us through sacred scriptures—something that many Christians enjoy on a regular basis. Our Heavenly Father speaks continually through the flow of his sacred Word, providing guidance and answers to questions that come about in our daily lives. Necessary to this divine form of communication is our interpretation of his sacred scriptures. Sadly, it is these interpretations that have led religious people to contend with one another, sometimes violently, over many centuries.

## The Bible

The Bible covers the period from the creation through shortly after the ascension of Jesus Christ. The 39 books of the Old Testament provide the law and prophecy of the coming of the Savior, while the 27 books of the New Testament provide a record of the life of the Savior, an introduction to the higher law, and faith promoting stories of His public ministry. Geographically, the Bible records the lives of people living in the Middle East. The Bible was authored by several inspired individuals and has been translated many times over from its original Hebrew and Greek by a variety of scholars and institutions.

In considering the Bible one must address the issue of translation. A Bible, or any work of scripture for that matter, is only as good as its translation. There are today multiple translations of the Bible, with no less than eighteen English translations of the Bible in active use, with dozens of other translations in circulation. These include the English Standard Version, Good News Bible,

Holman Christian Standard Bible, J B Phillips New Testament, King James Version, The Living Bible, The Message, New American Bible, New American Standard Bible, New International Version, (New) Jerusalem Bible, New King James Bible, New Living Translation, (New) Revised Standard Version, Today's English Version, the Amplified version, and Today's New International Version.

The diversity of these translations can be witnessed by studying a parallel Bible—in doing so one will find the translations in many instances to be very different from one another. Not only the translations, but the plain meanings they convey are in many cases different. For this reason it is necessary to put a short disclaimer that the Bible is the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly (AOF 8).

## Modern Day Scriptures

The Foundation realizes that most of the Christian world does not accept the existence of any scriptures outside of the Bible. To do so is considered blasphemous by many Bible-only Christians. However, one must question why the Lord would limit his omnipotence and omnipresence to only one closed work of scripture.

Paul wrote that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Because the Bible itself testifies to an open canon, the Foundation recognizes three other standard works of scripture, along with the possibility of ongoing revelation through the Holy Ghost being considered as scripture.

## The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon compliments the Bible in providing a record of people living in the Americas between approximately 2,200 B.C. and A.D. 400, with an emphasis on the lineage of Joseph in Egypt. As the subtitle of the Book of Mormon states, it is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," providing in particular a record of the visitation of Jesus Christ to the inhabitants of the Americas following his resurrection. The Book of Mormon was authored by several inspired individuals, abridged onto gold plates, and translated into English from its original reformed Egyptian text by the prophet Joseph Smith. The reformed Egyptian text originates from the authors who were

descendants of Joseph in Egypt. The one and only version of the Book of Mormon has been translated into well over 100 languages.

### **The Doctrine and Covenants**

The Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) is a collection of divine revelations given to modern day prophets. It was compiled from 1823 to 1978. The purpose of the Doctrine and Covenants is to prepare the inhabitants of the earth for the second coming of Jesus Christ by providing direction and guidance. Among other things the Doctrine and Covenants gives written details for the organization and operation of the Church and the offices of the priesthood and their ecclesiastical and spiritual functions.

### **The Pearl of Great Price and Revelation**

The Pearl of Great Price contains three different compilations: the Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham, and a collection of inspired writings by Joseph Smith. The Book of Moses is a work revealed to Joseph Smith pertaining to visions and writings of Moses that focus on the creation of the earth. The Book of Abraham is a translation of a papyrus scroll originating from the Egyptian catacombs, translated by Joseph Smith, which contains insights and information on the creation, the priesthood, the gospel, and the nature of God. The writings of Joseph Smith include a portion of Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible, a brief history of the Church, and the Articles of Faith (AOF).

Because of the doctrine of revelation, whenever the servants of the Lord speak or write under the influence of the Holy Ghost, their words become scripture. The words of the living prophets are also considered scripture, which are often delivered through Church publications, conferences, and other forms of inspired instruction.

### **Adding to the Bible Misunderstanding**

When the subject of additional scriptures is considered, some are quick to point the scripture from Revelation 22:18 which states: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." The objecting individual's interpretation of this scripture is that any additional scripture outside of the Bible is blasphemous

and will bring about condemnation. There are similar scriptures in Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32 that speak of not "adding to" the word of God. These Old Testament scriptures call into question the validity of the New Testament itself, since the New Testament was written long after these scriptures from Deuteronomy were written. Therefore, one must conclude that the scripture from Revelation 22:18 must be referring to adding to the revelation and prophecy of John, not to adding scripture outside of the Bible itself—especially since the New Testament was not formally canonized until 1546 at the Council of Trent.

### **Containing and Witnessing the Word of God**

With the Bible itself not testifying against the possibility of additional scriptures we must ask ourselves a simple question: Could the word of God be confined to a single written work? John 21:25 casts a serious doubt on this notion by stating: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Furthermore one must consider how a single book could testify of itself as being true. Matthew 18:16 suggests that one book cannot testify of itself: "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

### **The Book of Mormon Prophesied**

The coming forth of the Book of Mormon, another testament of Jesus Christ, was prophesied by the prophet Ezekiel who wrote: "Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes..." (Ezekiel 37:16-20). The stick of Judah would become the Bible, and the stick of Joseph would become the Book of Mormon.

This scripture from Ezekiel has been dismissed by some theologians and individuals who take issue with the term "sticks," believing the sticks to be nations and not books. However, the interpretation of the stick of Joseph being the Book of Mormon, and the stick of Judah being the Bible, is as solid of an interpretation as modern day theology can offer. The Book of Mormon witnesses of the Bible being true (1 Nephi 13:23-24), and the Bible witnesses of the Book of Mormon being true (Ezekiel 37:16-20)—both being testaments of Jesus Christ. This fulfills the scripture from Matthew 18:16 about the need for at least two witnesses.

### **Calling Man to Live a Higher Law**

Further study will help the well intentioned Christian to formulate the place of modern day revelation in the form of scripture. It is clear that God is continually calling man to live a higher law and that it became necessary to restore laws that were lost; hence, it is necessary for the Lord to provide additional scripture, to speak to us again, adding here a little, there a little, and enriching our understanding. For example Exodus 21:24 from the Old Testament provides justification of taking revenge on one's enemies; however, Matthew 5:44 from the New Testament calls for the loving of one's enemies—thus a higher law. Jesus set the example of this practice when he moved the Jews to a higher law in divorce from allowance (Deut. 24:1,3) to forbiddance (Matt. 5:31-32).

### **Clarifying Ambiguous Biblical Scriptures**

There are in fact several instances where the three additional standard works of modern day scripture helps illuminate and bring clarity to topics left ambiguous in the Bible alone. If left to stand without modern day scriptures, these topics would remain in a state of ambiguity, or rely on scholarly interpretations. In some cases these topics are of great importance, and it is difficult to believe a loving Father in Heaven would want to keep his children in the dark about such sacred matters. The Foundation provides the following examples of how modern day

scriptures provide spiritual support and understanding of matters addressed, but not reconciled, in the Bible:

#### ***Cain and Satan***

Genesis 4:8 from the Bible mentions that Cain slays his brother Abel after becoming angry when the Lord did not respect his offering. The Bible doesn't provide a reason for the killing or what motivated Cain to do such a thing. Moses 5 in the Pearl of Great Price provides important details on how Satan influenced Cain to commit the murderous act, providing vital spiritual insights for us to liken to ourselves in the struggle with evil.

#### ***Communal Sustenance***

Acts 2:44-45 and 2 Corinthians 8: 14 from the Bible discuss the virtues of communal living and economic equality in sharing all things in common; however, the Bible doesn't provide any details on how this can be accomplished or administered. In Doctrine and Covenants 42:30-36, the "law of consecration" is laid out in detail to the point of being operational in today's society.

#### ***Clean Living***

1 Corinthians 6:19 and Proverbs 20 from the Bible warns that God's children are to respect their physical bodies and refrain from certain substances; however, the Bible is light on specifics. Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, often referred to as the Word of Wisdom, provides exceptional detail and direction on matters of food, substance, and lifestyle that illuminate those scriptures introduced in the Bible. Included is an explanation of the associated blessings of clean living.

#### ***Baptism***

Baptism is first mentioned in the Bible in Mark 1:4, and later in John 3:5 as being essential to entering the kingdom of God. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 states metaphorically that the Israelites were "...baptized... in the cloud and in the sea." However, the Bible doesn't provide facts of when baptism started and how the requirement of baptism from John 3:5 applies to those who lived on the earth before John the Baptist. Such cryptic references to baptism leave huge gaps in spiritual understanding. One can read from 1 Nephi 20:1 in the Book of Mormon that Baptism existed at or around the time of Isaiah (740 B.C.). With further help from the Book

of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price one can gain a full understanding of the origin of baptism on the earth and how it can be traced literally back to the time of Adam.

### **Unforgivable Sin**

1 John 1:7 states that the Atonement of Jesus Christ can cleanse us all from sin. Conversely, Matthew 12:31-32 states that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven in this world or the next. These two scriptures from the Bible not only contradict one another, but the Bible doesn't provide any definition of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This paradox is reconciled through modern day revelation and scripture found in Doctrine and Covenants Section 132, verse 27, where blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is defined in detail.

Christian faith is meant to be reinforced and strengthened by these additions to the canon. One will move and act with deeper understanding and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ with them than what would have been possible without them. By the light of these sacred texts one can strengthen their faith, fully embrace the truth, live the Lord's commandments, and love Him more fully in service.

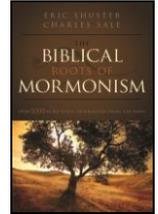
### **Conclusion**

Christians are exhorted to study the scriptures every day, as individuals and as families. In doing so individuals and families can avoid evil and grow closer to God—especially when the diligent Christian reads the scriptures in conjunction with pondering, praying, and asking God for further understanding through the Holy Ghost.

We should read the scriptures as part of our daily personal devotionals, as well as together as a family. We should feast upon the words of God, not just nibble at his sacred scriptures. We should always liken the scriptures to ourselves in order to give them more meaning in application to our own lives. In doing so we will have more joy, have a more personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and be more prepared for the challenges of life.

### **About The Sword Series™**

The Sword Series™ is a collection of Christian theological essays that are freely distributed for the education and enjoyment of all. These essays later inspired the book *The Biblical Roots of Mormonism* by Eric Shuster (2010). The views expressed in the Sword Series™ are those of Eric Shuster based upon his study and understanding of the scriptures under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All formatted content in this paper is the property of Eric Shuster and may be distributed freely. Any modification of the content of this paper without the express written consent of Eric Shuster is prohibited. Copyright 2008 ©



### **About the Foundation for Christian Studies**

The Foundation for Christian Studies is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, teaching, and practice of Christianity with an emphasis on the doctrines and principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism).