

“THIS IS MY DOCTRINE” radio notes

The following PDF document contains the notes used on the Viewpoint on Mormonism series that went for five weeks in January and February 2018 (Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson). It is offered to the supporters of MRM and its radio ministry. To see the past broadcasts of this show, go to mrm.org/viewpoint and search for “This is my Doctrine.”

Charles R. Harrell, *“This is My Doctrine”*: *The Development of Mormon Theology* (Sandy, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2011).

Highlights in gray are citations from this book

Highlights in yellow were made by Eric Johnson and were cited on the Viewpoint on Mormonism series

Highlights in aqua are LDS scripture citations

Episode 1: Introduction to “This Is My Doctrine”

Title of the book comes from D&C 10:67 (“This is my [God’s] doctrine”).

Harrell is an associate professor in the Manufacturing Engineering School of Technology. Some might complain that he is not in the School of Religion. Does it matter? What matters is whether or not he is writing the truth according to the facts, regardless of his background.

Why are we doing a review of a book that is not written by a General Authority or by the LDS Church?

1. It shows that when someone who is LDS goes out of the “Mormon box” to explain what a particular passage is saying in its historical context, the recorded statements made by LDS leaders over the years often get it wrong.
2. There are other ways to consider biblical passages—the way that involves the context and meaning of the biblical author more than a religion’s presupposed understanding of these particular passages.

Here are some reviews of his book:

From Improvement Era, April 30, 2011 (David Tayman)

Harrell, a faithful and practicing member of the Church, asserts that a belief in a seamless story isn’t necessary to maintain faith in God, Jesus Christ, or Joseph Smith’s prophetic call, and the authority of Restored Church. What he does suggest, in part, is that sometimes our understanding of key assertions and definitions (and especially attitudes of arrogant exclusivity) may need to be adjusted.

This book is going to have a mixed reception. There are some on the very doctrinally conservative wing of Mormonism who will view this book as heretical, and, based on a lack of hand-holding and apologetic buffering, their misunderstanding of Harrell’s intent may be interpreted as “Anti-Mormon”, and designed to destroy faith, and break down trust in the Lord’s Servants and Scriptures.

Some in the middle may view it as a breath of fresh air, acknowledging and validating their own self-discoveries and frustration, hoping it will have the effect of the Lutheran theses being nailed to the Correlation Department’s front door. Others will recognize the need for this type of book, but perhaps feel uncomfortable about the way the material was presented.

However, the other end of the spectrum, the traditional so-called Anti-Mormon crowd – especially those from Evangelical camps – would be unwise to champion this book in their cause, because without the principle of continuing revelation and allowance for theological, textual, and historical error to be found in scripture, this book would be far more damaging to their claims than it would be for the core of Mormonism.

From Packham.n4m.org (Richard Packham) <http://packham.n4m.org/doctrine.htm>

Note: Richard Packham is coming from an atheist worldview.

Harrell has certainly done a thorough job. He carefully cites relevant scriptures and pertinent comments on each issue from Mormon and non-Mormon scholars, carefully identifying the scholars as to their religion, institution, and historical period. The bibliography is a 33-page collection of every conceivable work dealing with religious doctrine, both Mormon and Christian.

And Harrell does not pull any punches. He analyzes each doctrinal issue in great detail, showing the arguments on all sides from the first hints of the idea in the Old Testament right down to the still-unsettled discussions from current LDS leaders. He presents not only what the scriptural passage says, but carefully points out what it does NOT say, which is usually what some theologian has "read into" the passage. Mormon readers may be surprised at the author's frank admission that so many fundamental doctrinal issues are indeed so fragile, so unsettled, and so contradictory. He calls them "problematic."

Although most Mormons are led to believe that the major points of Mormon doctrine are the result of direct revelations from God to the Prophet, Harrell shows that almost all of them were popular and well-known ideas at the time Joseph Smith received the revelation. Practically nothing originated with Joseph Smith. He offers no faith-saving explanation, but of course any faithful Saint will understand that it was God's way of preparing the world to receive the idea when it would finally be revealed to the Prophet.

A skeptical reader of Harrell's analyses might come to the conclusion that Mormon doctrine is not based at all on revelation, but was just made up as the situation demanded. (The person who used the analogy of the opening rosebud described the actual situation as being "like a chameleon, changing its color to match the environment.") Not until the end of the book does the author - presumably a devout Mormon, since he teaches at BYU - offer any way out of such a conclusion for the faithful Saint. He suggests that however changing and imprecise Mormon doctrine may be, it is still valuable because "it works." He does not explain why that should be, or why Mormon doctrine "works" any better than, say, Islamic or Catholic or Baha'i doctrine. Nor does he acknowledge that for many Mormons and former Mormons, Mormon doctrine does NOT "work." The implicit admission seems to be that it is completely irrelevant whether it is actually true and actually revealed from God. Truth, it seems, is not that important.

Regardless of what conclusion any reader might reach about the divinity or truth of Mormon doctrine, no one interested in Mormon teachings should ignore the vast amount of information in this book. It used to be that books about Mormon doctrine were either prescriptive, by Mormon theologians, saying what the correct doctrine was, or critical, by critics of Mormonism, saying why the doctrine (as they understood it) was false. This book is of neither kind, and will be of great worth to both sides. I know of no other book like it.

Episode 2: Introduction to “This is My Doctrine” Part 2

Rational Faiths (Keeping Mormonism Weird) Book Review: <http://rationalfaiths.com/this-is-my-doctrine-the-development-of-mormon-theology-by-charles-harrell-book-review/>

Matthew Kern, Feb. 20, 2013

Harrell obviously knows that reading the core chapters of the book are not the most faith promoting. This is especially true if read with the intention of looking for a beautiful picture of how Mormonism's doctrine, God's people's doctrine, has been the same through all times. At times it may seem that the book is refuting LDS doctrines. I myself felt this way after reading section after section on doctrines that do not correlate well with what the current understood doctrines are. I see now that I still wanted to hold onto at least a portion of the clarity found in universal doctrines I grew up with. In the preface and the epilogue he makes a good attempt to explain his purpose due to the critical nature of the text contained in the book. He is very direct in saying that, although he is an active LDS man, the purpose of the book is "meant to be neither apologetic nor polemic".

Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ*, p. 45 writes:

“But are we not required then to keep the commandments? The answer is yes—and no. When I ask my students if it is necessary to keep the commandments to enter into the celestial kingdom, they all answer with absolute certainty that it is. They know that this is true because they have heard church leaders and teachers tell them so all of their lives.”

Robinson writes as if he didn't agree with everything his leaders have taught, but unlike Harrell, he does not name names.

According to Harrell, the church has not published an “official exposition of Mormon doctrines.”

- Page 1: “...the Church has never published an ‘official’ exposition of Mormon doctrines. . . . Rather than have a static doctrinal creed, Latter-day Saints are to let the revelations speak for themselves on doctrinal matters while continuing to remain open to further light and knowledge from the Lord.”

Response: Is this true? Not according to the Mormon Newsroom, published on an official LDS Church website

“In addition, information on official Church Web sites is reliable and consistent with the doctrines and policies of the Church. All materials on Newsroom and other Church Web sites are carefully reviewed and approved before they are posted. . . . In a complementary way, Newsroom, LDS.org and other Church Web sites provide an official voice from the Church.”
(<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/the-church-and-new-media:-clarity,-context-and-an-official-voice-newsroom-lds.org-full-story>)

Conclusion: While the LDS Church has not compiled a “Mormon Doctrine” type of book, why hasn't it? After all, this is a church that claims to have authoritative leaders with a direct connection to God. If these leaders have the ability to put any issue to bed, it would seem that they would use “thus saith the Lord” and make this happen.

Episode 3: How is the Latter-day Saint supposed to get doctrine? Part 1

- Page 2: “Latter-day Saints closer to the conservative end of the theological spectrum tend to view scripture as the infallible word of God and, therefore, doctrinally sound. Mormons towards the liberal end accept the scriptures as inspired, but may at the same time also perceive them to be human-informed and, therefore, not to be taken indiscriminately as the absolute truth.”

The Myth of Doctrinal Uniformity

- “In addition to viewing the scriptures as essentially inerrant, there is also a tendency among many Latter-day Saints to view them as being uniformly consistent in the doctrines they teach” (p. 5)

*** Concerning the revelation on blacks and the priesthood, he refers to Apostle Bruce R. McConkie on page 6: “Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.”

*** LDS Church leaders allow for the possibility of changing things when it is needed. Harrell refers to a May 2007 release on the Church’s LDS Newsroom website entitled “Approaching Church Doctrine” that states, “The Church does not preclude future additions or changes to its teachings or practices.”

The Myth of Prophetic Infallibility

- “Significantly, the Church has never officially endorsed the doctrine of prophetic infallibility” (p. 7)
- “But, one might ask, isn’t it better for Latter-day Saints to always defer to Church leaders and give them the benefit of the doubt than to be tentative or perhaps even skeptical? While there may be a certain virtue in respecting the authority of Church leaders in doctrinal matters, blindly accepting their teachings as the absolute truth may be more of a sign of credulity than genuine faith. President Hugh B. Brown, counselor to President David O. McKay, counseled that ‘while all Mormons should respect, support, and heed the teachings of the authorities of the Church, no one should accept a statement and base his or her testimony upon it, no matter who makes it, until he or she has, under mature examination, found it to be true and worthwhile.’” (pp. 7-8)
- He goes on to say, “Much of the more vicious anti-Mormon literature written to date has been dependent upon this fallacious assumption of prophetic infallibility, and Saints who based their faith on this faulty assumption run the risk of painting themselves into a doctrinal corner.” (p. 8)

Conclusion: If the men in the leadership ranks of the LDS Church are really connected to God, then it would seem that people should accept their teachings as absolute truth. The prophets of the OT spoke with authority and were very clear in their teaching and proclamations. Why shouldn’t the LDS be held to a higher standard? Or if what they teach today could be considered “wrong” tomorrow, then should anything they have to say be heeded?

Episode 4: How is the Latter-day Saint supposed to get doctrine? Part 2

Here's what Harrell says about proof-texting on page 8:

“A proof-text is a scriptural passage lifted out of its original context and given an interpretation other than that which was originally intended—or at least as can be determined by the most reasonable reading of the text. BYU religion professor Stephen Robinson notes that even Latter-day Saints have a tendency to read Mormon beliefs into the Bible as proof-texts, largely because they assume that the doctrines of the Restoration are all corroborated in the Bible. Most occurrences of proof-texting are the innocent result of careless or uninformed reading of the scriptures, though they can still be detrimental. When, however, one deliberately twists the meaning of a passage in order to justify a personal belief or bias, it is condemned in both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon as ‘wresting [i.e., twisting] the scriptures’ (2 Pet. 3:16; Alma 13:20, 41:1).”

Based on yesterday's show, we would like to ask two questions:

- “Why do leaders talk as if they were infallible?”
- “Was Joseph Smith infallible? Could it be possible he was wrong?”

What have LDS leaders taught regarding their teaching and the way that their people ought to receive this teaching?

“When did I ever teach anything wrong from this stand? When was I ever confounded? I want to triumph in Israel before I depart hence and am no more seen. I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 368. Also cited by Apostle Neal A. Maxwell, “The Wondrous Restoration,” in *Ensign*, April 2003, p. 36).

“When we hear the counsel of the Lord expressed through the words of the president of the Church, our response should be positive and prompt” (M. Russell Ballard, “Voice of the Living Prophet Gives Clear Direction,” *Church News*, April 7, 2001, p. 19).

“When we speak of following the Brethren, we mean particularly the First Presidency and the Twelve. In 1951, President Kimball observed in a general conference that though some of those special individuals might falter, ‘there will never be a majority of the Council of the Twelve on the wrong side at any time.’” (Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, p. 102).

“Our relationship to living prophets is not one in which their sayings are a smorgasbord from which we may take only that which pleases us. We are to partake of all that is placed before us, including the spinach, and to leave a clean plate!” (Neal A. Maxwell, *Things as They Really Are*, p. 74).

Church manuals echo the same:

“We may never have a General Authority visit our home, but we can receive similar blessings if we accept the General Authorities by following their inspired counsel in our

homes” (*Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part A*, 2000, p. 83).

“When the prophet speaks to us in the name of the Lord, he speaks what the Lord would say if He were here” (*The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women, Part B*, 2000, p. 99).

“The President of the Church is the mouthpiece of God on earth. As such, he reveals the will of God for us today. Therefore, when we follow the inspired counsel of the prophet, we are following God and obeying His will” (*Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part B*, 2000, p. 234)

“A prophet is ‘a person who has been called by and speaks for God. As a messenger of God, a prophet receives commandments, prophecies, and revelations from God. His responsibility is to make known God’s will and true character to mankind and to show the meaning of his dealings with them. A prophet denounces sin and foretells its consequences. He is a preacher of righteousness. On occasion, prophets may be inspired to foretell the future for the benefit of mankind. His primary responsibility, however, is to bear witness of Christ. The President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s prophet on earth today. Members of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators’ (Guide to the Scriptures, ‘Prophet,’ scriptures.lds.org; emphasis added)” (*Teachings of the Living Prophets Student Manual Religion 333*, 2010, p. 9. Bold in original).

Conclusion: Based on these statement, leaders in the past certainly felt they were telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Episode 5: Scriptural Inerrancy: Is it a Myth?

Myth of Scriptural Inerrancy

Harrell writes:

- “Latter-day Saints closer to the conservative end of the theological spectrum tend to view scripture as the infallible word of God and, therefore, doctrinally sound. Mormons towards the liberal end accept the scriptures as inspired, but may at the same time also perceive them to be human-informed and, therefore, not to be taken indiscriminately as the absolute truth” (p. 2).
- “Conservative Latter-day Saints, therefore, tend to take an inerrantist view of scripture, maintaining that, aside from translation and transcription errors, the doctrinal teachings of scripture are without error or variation. Their syllogistic reasoning seems to be:

God’s word is without error or variation
Scripture is the word of God
Therefore, scripture is without error or variation

On the other hand, Mormons who are more liberal in their doctrinal thinking tend to take a less rigid stance toward scripture, seeing it as mediated through humans and, therefore, not entirely free from misconceptions and inconsistencies. . . . In other words, while a liberal perspective may accept the scriptures as the word of God, it does not see the scriptures as being literally God’s words” (p. 3).

- “Modern biblical scholarship generally agrees that the mediation of scripture through finite and fallible humans necessarily presents a limited and imperfect view of ultimate reality.” (p. 3)
- “In some instances, scriptural writers themselves admit to expressing their own “judgment” (1 Cor. 7:25) and personal “opinion” (Alma 40:20) that may be subject to error.” (p. 3)

What does inerrancy mean?

2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God[a] may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 1:21:

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

According to Christian theologian Millard J. Erickson, the definition of Inerrancy is this:

“The Bible, when correctly interpreted in light of the level to which culture and the means of communication had developed at the time it was written, and in view of the purposes for which it was given, is fully truthful in all that it affirms.” (p. 63)

1. Inerrancy pertains to what is affirmed or asserted rather than what is merely reported.

- a. The Bible reports false statements by ungodly person. The presence of these statements in the Scripture does not mean they are true; it only guarantees that they are correctly reported.
2. We must judge the truthfulness of Scripture in terms of what the statements meant in the cultural setting in which they were expressed.
 - a. Not always exact word for word
 - b. Numbers were sometimes used symbolically in ancient times
3. The Bible's assertions are fully true when judged in accordance with the purpose for which they were written.
 - a. The word "son," for instance, could mean descendants
 - b. In a battle, suppose exactly 9,479 killed. Would 10,000 be accurate? Would 9,000? How about 9,500? Is the biblical writer given the freedom to round up or down?
 - c. Luke has "Glory in the highest" while Matthew and Mark have "Hosanna in the highest." Glory would have made more sense to Luke's Gentile readership.
4. Reports of historical events and scientific matters are in phenomenal rather than technical languages.
 - a. The sun rises, the sun sets.
 - b. Figure of speech, even used in today's language (watch the weather report).
5. Difficulties in explaining the biblical text should not be prejudged as indications of error.
 - a. Death of Judas: According to Matthew 27:5, Judas committed suicide by hanging himself; Acts 1:18, however, states that "falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out." The specific Greek word in Acts that caused the difficulty is *prenes*. For a long period of time it was understood to mean only "falling head-long." Twentieth-century investigations of ancient papyri, however, have revealed that this word has another meaning in Koine Greek. It also means "swelling up." It is now possible to hypothesize an end of Judas's life which seems to accommodate all of the data. Having hanged himself, Judas was not discovered for some time. In such a situation the visceral organs begin to degenerate first, causing a swelling of the abdomen characteristic of cadavers that have not been properly embalmed...And so, "swelling up [Judas] burst open in the middle and his bowels gushed out." While there is no way of knowing whether this is what actually took place, it seems to be a workable and adequate resolution of the difficulty.

Is it possible that the biblical apostles gave their own opinions?

Certainly. And when that happened, the writer seemed to say so. Regarding marriage, for instance, Paul said in 1 Cor. 7:10-12:

10 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband 11 (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. 12 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.

Just because the biblical authors gave their personal opinion does not mean everything they wrote was their personal opinion.

Peter understood that Paul was writing scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16 says,

15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Conclusion: Conservative Protestant (Evangelical) Christians have held that:

- 1) Their Bible can be trusted, as originally written by men of God
- 2) The Bible is inspired by the Spirit of God
- 3) Those who wrote used their own style and provided their opinions
- 4) These writers did not have to say, "Thus saith the Lord," for something to be considered a command by God

Episode 6: The Accuracy of the Bible Part 1

Citations by General Authorities about the Trustworthiness of the Bible

Apostle Orson Pratt:

“What shall we say then, concerning the Bible’s being a sufficient guide? Can we rely upon it in its present known corrupted state, as being a faithful record of God’s word? We all know that but a few of the inspired writings have descended to our times, which few quote the names of some twenty other books which are lost, and it is quite certain that there were many other inspired books that even the names have not reached us. What few [books of the Bible] have come down to our day, have been mutilated, changed and corrupted, in such a shameful manner that no two manuscripts agree. Verses and even whole chapters have been added by unknown persons; and even we do not know the authors of some whole books; and we are not certain that all those which we do know, were written by inspiration. Add all this imperfection to the uncertainty of the translation, and who, in his right mind, could, for one moment suppose the Bible in its present form to be a perfect guide? Who knows that even one verse of the Bible has escaped pollution, so as to convey the same sense now that it did in the original? Who knows how many important doctrines and ordinances necessary to salvation may be buried in oblivion in some of the lost books? Who knows that even the ordinances and doctrine that seem to be set forth in the present English Bible, are anything like the original? The Catholics and Protestants do not know, because tradition is too imperfect to give this knowledge. There can be no certainty as to the contents of the inspired writings until God shall inspire some one to re-write all those books over again, as he did Esdras in ancient times. There is no possible means of arriving at certainty in any other way. No reflecting man can deny the necessity of such a new revelation” (Orson Pratt, *Divine Authenticity of Book of Mormon*, No. 3 (December 1, 1850), “The Bible and tradition, without further revelation, an insufficient guide,” p. 47).

“The Bible bears true witness of God and his gospel as far as it is translated correctly. Many plain and precious things have been deleted, however; and the Book of Mormon is the means, provided by divine wisdom, to pour forth the gospel word as it was given in perfection to the ancients. It has come to preserve and sustain the Bible, not to destroy or dilute its message” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man*, p. 160).

“The Bible, as it has been transmitted over the centuries, has suffered the loss of many plain and precious parts” (Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas Monson, “Letter Reaffirms Use of King James Version of Bible,” *Church News*, June 20, 1992, p. 3).

“By faulty transmission, many ‘plain and precious things’ were ‘taken away’ or ‘kept back’ from reaching what later composed our precious Holy Bible” (Neil A. Maxwell, “The Wondrous Restoration,” *Ensign*, April 2003, p. 35).

Consider what Harrell has to say about this issue:

Page 97: “Aside from the countless minor scribal errors, scholars maintain that, ‘in general, the Bible has been transmitted and translated remarkably well.’ BYU religion professor Stephen Robinson notes that ‘informed Latter-day Saints’ are in general agreement that, since the time of its compilation in the late second or third century, the Bible has been preserved with reasonably high fidelity and “the texts are essentially correct in their present form.”

Episode 7: The Accuracy of the Bible Part 2

Joseph Smith said, “I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 327).

Harrell says (quoted at the end of yesterday’s show) on page 97: “Aside from the countless minor scribal errors, scholars maintain that, ‘in general, the Bible has been transmitted and translated remarkably well.’ BYU religion professor Stephen Robinson notes that ‘informed Latter-day Saints’ are in general agreement that, since the time of its compilation in the late second or third century, the Bible has been preserved with reasonably high fidelity and “the texts are essentially correct in their present form.”

Consider this citation from an LDS scholar:

“One can disagree with the textual assumptions behind some of the modern translations of the New Testament and still not be overly concerned with differences that are immaterial. For a book to undergo progressive uncovering of its manuscript history and come out with so little debatable in its text is a great tribute to its essential authenticity. First, no new manuscript discovery has produced serious differences in the essential story. This survey has disclosed the leading textual controversies, and together they would be well within one percent of the text. Stated differently, all manuscripts agree on the essential correctness of 99 percent of all the verses in the New Testament. The second great fact that such a survey demonstrates is the progress that has placed the world in possession of manuscripts very near to the time of their writing. One would have to be a student of ancient history to appreciate how much superior the New Testament is to any other any book in its manuscript tradition” (BYU Professor Lloyd Anderson, “Manuscript Discoveries of the New Testament in Perspective,” *Papers of the Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, Presented April 13, 1963, pp. 57-58).

Harrell notes that this is not what the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith thought:

- 1 Nephi 13:24: “And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.”
- 1 Nephi 13:28: “Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God.”
 - Page 98: “Since LDS scholars generally concur that the Bible as we now have it is an essentially faithful translation of the surviving manuscripts, some have chosen to interpret 1 Nephi 13:24 as meaning that these plain and precious truths were either removed from individual manuscripts before the Bible was compiled, or they were present in certain manuscripts that never found their way into the Bible. Nephi specifically states, however, that it was ‘the book’ itself that would go forth ‘from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles’ (1 Nephi 13:23-25), and only ‘after’ that did he see ‘the formulation of that great and abominable church, which ...[has] taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious’ (1 Ne. 13:26).”

See “10 Reasons why it makes sense to trust the Bible” (mrm.org/10-bible)

Episode 8: Joseph Smith's Changing Doctrine

- Pages 20-21: “It is noteworthy that the doctrines expressed in the Book of Mormon tend to bear closer similarity to those found in early nineteenth-century Protestantism than to those in later Mormonism. ... It is certainly conceivable that the people of the Book of Mormon didn't have all the gospel teachings that Saints have today (even though they presumably had the ‘fulness of the gospel’), but one wonders why virtually none of the doctrines that would later distinguish Mormonism from other Christian faiths is to be found in the Book of Mormon.”

Tenth President Joseph Fielding Smith discussed “fulness of the gospel”:

“FULNESS OF THE GOSPEL. By fulness of the gospel is meant all the ordinances and principles that pertain to the exaltation in the celestial kingdom...” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 1:159. Italics and ellipsis in original).

The point is that the “fulness of the gospel” cannot be found in early Mormonism, as so many doctrines changed in Joseph Smith's

Things not taught in the Book of Mormon but taught in historic Mormonism:

- God has a body of flesh and bones or that he is an exalted man
- Plurality of gods
- Progression into godhood in the next life (“As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.”)
- Preexistence
- Marriage is for time and eternity
- No hell or eternal punishment
- Three degrees of glory
- Melchizedek Priesthood
- Temple ceremonies had anything to do with eternal progression
- Baptisms for the dead (or any work for the dead) had any lasting value

Harrell writes:

- Page 21: “Beginning with the Kirtland era and accelerating into the Nauvoo period (1835-44), Joseph Smith began advancing bold new doctrines that went well beyond (and sometimes against) his own earlier teachings. It is during this period that Mormon theology really began to diverge from its evangelical roots. The fact that members were able to remain faithful during such turbulent theological times is a testament to their implicit faith in being led by a living prophet.”
- Page 22: “It is noteworthy that early in Joseph Smith's prophetic career his teachings reflected a more figurative interpretation of the scriptures.”

- Page 22: “LDS teachings on temple worship, preexistence, and the cosmos during the Nauvoo era seem to resonate with ideas in contemporary Masonry and hermetic traditions which were publicized in Joseph Smith’s day.”
- Page 91: “Few of the doctrines unique to Mormonism, however, are sufficiently elucidated in the Bible to be clearly recognizable. Among these are doctrines of the preexistence, eternal marriage, and salvation for the dead. Referring to these and other distinctive Mormon doctrines, LDS scholar Terryl Givens observed, ‘In none of these cases, or a dozen others that could be mentioned, could one make a reasonable theological defense of the Prophet’s ampler enactment of these principles and practices on the bases of the few paltry biblical allusions that exist.’”

Episode 9: The Great Apostasy (chapter 2 in *This is My Doctrine*)

Chapter 2: The Great Apostasy

B.H. Roberts said,

“Nothing less than a complete apostasy from the Christian religion would warrant the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints” (B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church* 1:XL).

From Joseph Smith History 1 found in the Pearl of Great Price:

18 My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

19 I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”

20 He again forbade me to join with any of them;

From Church Manuals:

“Explain that after Jesus Christ was crucified, His Apostles presided over the Church. But soon persecution, divisions, and apostasy increased. Within a few decades, there was a falling away from the Church, as the Apostles had prophesied (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:3-4). This falling away is known as the Great Apostasy” (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, pp. 11-12).

“Investigators must be told that a universal apostasy occurred following the death of Jesus and His Apostles. If there had been no apostasy, there would have been no need of a Restoration. As a diamond on black velvet appears more brilliant, so the restoration stands in striking contrast to the dark background of the Great Apostasy. As guided by the Spirit, teach investigators about the Great Apostasy at a level of detail appropriate to their needs and circumstance. Your purpose is to help them understand the need for the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (*Preach My Gospel*, 2004, p. 36).

“One by one, the Apostles were killed or otherwise taken from the earth. Because of wickedness and apostasy, the apostolic authority and priesthood keys were also taken from the earth. The organization that Jesus Christ had established no longer existed, and confusion resulted. More and more error crept into Church doctrine, and soon the dissolution of the Church was complete. The period of time when the true Church no longer existed on earth is called the Great Apostasy. Soon pagan beliefs dominated the thinking of those called Christians” (*Gospel Principles*, 2009, p. 92).

“The Savior told him not to join any church because the true Church was not on the earth. He also said that the creeds of present churches were ‘an abomination in his sight’ (Joseph Smith— History 1:19; see also verses 7–18, 20)” (*Gospel Principles*, 2009, p. 96).

“As you help investigators see the pattern of apostasy and restoration, they will be prepared to understand the great need for the latter-day Restoration. They will see the need to accept the restored gospel, receive the ordinances of salvation by the authority of the restored priesthood, and follow the way to eternal life. Help people recognize that the Church is not just another religion, nor is it an American church. Rather, it is a restoration of the ‘fulness of [the] gospel’ (D&C 1:23), the same as was revealed and taught from the beginning” (*Preach My Gospel*, 2004, p. 7)

Episode 10: The Great Apostasy (chapter 2 in *This is My Doctrine*) Part 2

According to Apostle Bruce R. McConkie:

“There is to be absolute, total, complete apostasy after John’s day and before the angelic ministrations commence. The falling away shall be complete, the apostasy universal. Gross darkness shall be everywhere. The gospel shall not be found in any nation, among any kindred; no tongue shall teach its truths, and no people rejoice in its blessings, for all these shall receive it as a result of the angelic ministrations” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 3:528).

According to Harrell:

- Pages 31-32: “According to traditional LDS teachings, Old and New Testament prophets expressly prophesied of the Great Apostasy. However, as recent LDS scholars affirm, at least some biblical passages typically cited as prophecies of the apostasy appear to actually be referring to other times or to less dire situations. . . .Of course, Latter-day Saints assert that certain prophecies, such as those predicting a loss of priesthood authority, may have been suppressed by heretical groups and therefore never found their way into the Bible as passed down.”
- Page 32: “Passages in the Old Testament referring to ancient Israel’s apostate condition are seen by many Latter-day Saints as referring to the much later Great Apostasy and Dark Ages presumed to have followed the deaths of the apostles. For example, Isaiah laments, “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, [and] broken the everlasting covenant” (Isa. 24:5). This same language appears in Doctrines and Covenants 1:15 to describe the situation at the time of Joseph Smith, suggesting that ‘the everlasting covenant’ spoken of by Isaiah refers to the everlasting gospel. Latter-day Saints, therefore, commonly infer that Isaiah must have been speaking of apostate Christianity leading up to the time of Joseph Smith. The Old Testament itself gives no clear indication that the ‘everlasting covenant’ equates to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”
- Pages 33-34: (New Testament): “There is little evidence that these writers perceived any threats to the church. . . . Although New Testament writers spoke of a current rebellion and persecution that would continue to rage, the saints were to find solace in knowing that their Savior would soon return in glory to quell this rebellion and rescue the righteous.”
- Page 37: (Referring to Acts 20:29-30) and citing 1 Timothy 4:1, which says...”some shall depart from the faith.” “Even assuming that Paul anticipate an entire overthrow of the flock at Ephesus, it isn’t clear that he intended his comment for the entire church. His precaution to the elders of the church of Ephesus was that ‘grievous wolves’ would enter among ‘you’ (Acts 20:29).”
- Page 41: “Although the Prophet recalls, in his 1838 account of the First Vision, that ‘it had never entered into my heart that all [churches] were wrong’ (JS-H 1:18), his prior autobiographical sketch, written in 1832, states that, as early as 1818, he had concluded that all ‘had apostatized from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament.’ Given his family and environmental influences, it is little wonder that Joseph had essentially already rejected

the Christian denominations of his day before going into the grove of trees near his home to pray for guidance.”

Episode 11: President Russell M. Nelson invites young adults to study the Bible with Him

Article in the Deseret News 9/21/17

The Holy Bible and the Book of Mormon are companion scriptures that teach of Christ and testify of each other, President Russell M. Nelson, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught young adults during an institute devotional on Sept. 17.

Speaking to a near capacity crowd in the Dee Glen Smith Spectrum arena on the Utah State University campus in Logan, Utah, President Nelson invited listeners to “work on a project” with him.

“Would you like to know what I am working on now?” he asked. “Months ago, I read all the scriptures listed under the title of Jesus Christ in the Topical Guide. I invited young adults to do the same. Many have accepted that invitation. It changed my life.”

Now, the senior Church leader said, he is rereading the Bible. This time, he said, he is seeking to learn how the inspired and holy ancient record predicted the coming of the Book of Mormon.

“I want to know its prophecies about the gathering of Israel,” he said. “I want to find its prophecies about the Restoration of the gospel in its fullness in these latter days.”

Recognizing it is an unfinished project, President Nelson invited listeners to begin their study by participating with him. Sharing an experience he had with a Protestant minister, President Nelson spoke of his answer to the minister’s question if he believes in the Bible, “every word of it?”

“I think he expected me to say, ‘yes, as far as it is translated correctly,’ ” he said. “But I did not. I said, ‘Yes, especially Isaiah 29 and Ezekiel 37.’ ”

President Nelson invited listeners to begin with him in those particular chapters, because “they each foretell the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.”

Episode 12: Ezekiel 37 and Isaiah 29 and how the LDS Church has interpreted these passages

In his October 2007 General Conference talk, Russell M Nelson explained in the talk titled "Scriptural Witnesses" (*Ensign*, November 2007):

How do scriptures of the Restoration clarify the Bible? Many examples exist. I will cite but a few, beginning with the Old Testament.

Isaiah wrote, "Thou shalt ... speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust." Could any words be more descriptive of the Book of Mormon, coming as it did "out of the ground" to "whisper out of the dust" to people of our day?

But Isaiah was not the only Old Testament prophet who foretold the Book of Mormon. Ezekiel wrote:

"Take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel ... : then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel ... :

"And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand."

Today, Saints living in many nations of the earth gratefully hold the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Ephraim) bound as one in their hands.

April 2013, he said the same thing:

"Prophecies that the stick of Joseph (the Book of Mormon) and the stick of Judah (the Bible) would be one in God's hand have now been fulfilled" (Russell M. Nelson, "Catch the Wave," *Ensign* (Conference Edition), May 2013, p. 47).

Episode 13: Ezekiel 37

Isaiah 29

Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices.

² Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.

³ And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.

⁴ And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

¹⁴ Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

LDS authors write:

Apostle LeGrand Richards explains, “Well did Isaiah predict: ‘For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.’ (Isaiah 29:14.) How could this prediction possibly be more literally fulfilled than in the case of Joseph Smith and the work the Lord established through him?” (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, p. 412).

After citing this passage, he writes, “Since the departure from the true gospel of Christ was to be universal, as the prophets foretold, and since such universal apostasy was confirmed in the statement of Jesus to Joseph Smith, it would follow that a restoration would be necessary. Such a restoration is the message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, p. 32).

Joseph Fielding Smith commented, “This marvelous work is the restoration of the Church and the Gospel with all the power and authority, keys and blessings which pertain to this great work for the salvation of the children of men.” (*Church History and Modern Revelation* 1:35)

Consider 2 LDS Church manuals:

Lesson 122: Isaiah 29: Old Testament Seminary Teacher Manual, 2014

Introduction

Isaiah prophesied of the Great Apostasy and the Restoration of the gospel, including the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He prophesied that the Book of Mormon would correct false doctrine and bring joy to those who read and live by its teachings.

Suggestions for Teaching

Isaiah 29:1–17

Isaiah prophesies of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration

Show students two wooden boards of equal length. Place one of the boards on top of the other, and nail them together at one end so the boards can swivel. Explain that the single nail represents the Bible, the bottom board represents the doctrine of Christ, and the top board represents how some people interpret the Bible. Move the top board to various positions.

Why are there so many different Christian churches if they all believe in the Bible? (Christian denominations interpret the Bible and Christ's doctrine differently.)

How can you know the Lord's true doctrine when there are so many ways to interpret the Bible?

Invite students to look for truths as they study Isaiah 29 that can help them know the Lord's true doctrine.

Summarize Isaiah 29:1–8 by explaining that Isaiah prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred because of the wickedness of the people who lived there. He also referred to the Nephite nation, which would also be destroyed because of wickedness. Point out the phrase, "thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust" (verse 4). Explain that this prophecy refers to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, which was translated from plates hidden in the ground by Moroni. The voice of the Nephite people speaks to us today from the pages of that book. Explain that Isaiah also spoke of the conditions of the latter days (see verses 5–10).

Invite a student to read Isaiah 29:9–10 aloud. Ask the class to follow along, looking for what Isaiah prophesied would happen after the Lord's people fell to their enemies.

According to verse 10, what did Isaiah say would happen after the Lord's people fell to their enemies? (People would experience "the spirit of deep sleep," and the prophets and seers would be covered, or removed from the people.)

Explain that with the loss of the prophets and the straying of the Lord's people from the truth, the world would fall into a state of spiritual darkness. This falling away from truth is called apostasy.

Write the phrase the Great Apostasy on the board. Explain that Isaiah's words in verses 9–10 refer to a period known as the Great Apostasy, which would occur after the death of the Savior and His Apostles.

Over time, people changed many gospel principles and ordinances and altered the organization of the Savior's Church. Consequently, the Lord withdrew the authority and keys of His priesthood from the earth. Many of the "plain and precious" parts of the Bible were also corrupted or lost, and the people no longer had an accurate understanding of God (see 1 Nephi 13:26–29). Eventually many churches were established, but they did not have the authority to perform priesthood ordinances or to properly interpret the Bible.

Write the following doctrine on the board: During a period of great apostasy, people were without divine direction from living prophets and apostles.

How does the object lesson with the boards relate to the Great Apostasy?

Explain that Isaiah also prophesied of events in the last days that would help end the Great Apostasy.

ISAIAH 29

A Marvelous Work and a Wonder

"Isaiah 29: A Marvelous Work and a Wonder," Old Testament Seminary Student Study Guide (2002), 145–46

Sometimes people who are familiar with the Bible and are not members of the Church will ask us something like "If the Book of Mormon is such an important part of the work of God, why is it not mentioned in the Bible?" There are several answers to that question, and one of them is "It is!" Isaiah 29 is one place in the Bible where the Book of Mormon is referred to, even though it is not mentioned by name. As you read this chapter, look for prophecies of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the impact this book will have on the world.

Isaiah 29:11–12, 18–24—What Is "the Book" Referred to in This Chapter?

Those familiar with the restored gospel will probably see that Isaiah 29 refers to the Book of Mormon and the role it plays in the Restoration of the gospel in the latter days. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

"Few men on earth, either in or out of the Church, have caught the vision of what the Book of Mormon is all about. Few are they among men who know the part it has played and will yet play in preparing the way for the coming of Him of whom it is a new witness. ... "... The Book of Mormon shall so affect men that the whole earth and all its peoples will have been influenced and governed by it. ... "... There is no

greater issue ever to confront mankind in modern times than this: Is the Book of Mormon the mind and will and voice of God to all men?" (The Millennial Messiah [1982], 159, 170, 179).

Episode 14: Harrell's take on Isaiah 29

Harrell responds to what LDS leaders have said about Isaiah 29 (see episode 13):

Page 51: “Non-LDS Bible commentators make two observations that preclude the “one that hath a familiar spirit” from having direct reference to Joseph Smith. First, they point out that Isaiah 29 is specifically addressing the current situation of wickedness in Jerusalem or ‘the city where Davide dwelt’ (Is. 29:1). There is no mention of any other people or place. Second, it doesn’t say that this nation will speak through some actual person, such as Joseph Smith. Rather, the voice of the nation would be ‘as’ (v. 4) a person who has a familiar spirit.”

“The other verse in Isaiah 29 presumed to be a reference to Joseph Smith speaks of a ‘book [that] is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee and he saith, I am not learned’ (v. 12) Latter-day Saints tend to interpret the ‘book’ as the gold plates and the one ‘not learned’ as Joseph Smith. This interpretation derives from a rewording of this passage in the Book of Mormon which speaks of the gold plates coming forth in the latter days as a sealed book that ‘shall be delivered unto a man [i.e., Joseph Smith]’ (2 Ne. 27:9; JS-H 1:63-65). The problem with this interpretation is that Isaiah is not prophesying of an actual book delivered to a real person. Rather he is reprimanding the Jews for their spiritual blindness—‘For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep’ (Is. 29:10)—and *likens* the nation to an unlearned person trying to read a sealed book. Thus, Isaiah’s words are, to them, ‘like the words of a book that is sealed.’ When read at face value, Isaiah seems to be merely comparing Israel’s inability to discern the word of God to an unlearned person’s inability to read a book.

Given these obstacles to the traditional LDS interpretation, some LDS scholars now concede that Isaiah 29 has reference to the spiritual condition of ancient Jerusalem and that the prophet Nephi was only drawing on the language of Isaiah to construct his ‘own prophecy’ (2 Ne. 25:7). Thus Nephi wasn’t interpreting Isaiah, but merely ‘likening’ (1 Ne. 19:23; 2 Ne. 6:5) or adapting the words of Isaiah to the Nephite situation and the latter-day coming forth of the Book of Mormon.”

Page 84: “When read in context, the ‘marvelous work and a wonder’ in Isaiah appears to refer to God’s work of vengeance on the ungodly, not his blessing of the righteous. The Lord declares, “Forasmuch as this people . . . have removed their heart far from me . . . I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men will be hid’ (Isa. 29:13-14). It will be a wonder ‘for’ (i.e., because) the wisdom of the wise shall perish. God’s wonderful and marvelous works are not always positive in nature (see, for example, the “wonderful” plagues described in Deut. 28:59). This may explain why the very next verse reads, “Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord’ (Is. 29:15).”

The following comes from chapter 33 of Answering Mormons’ Questions (“If the Book of Mormon is just a novel, then why do Isaiah and Ezekiel predict its forthcoming”), pages 253ff.

Those who were listening to Nelson’s talk would have been at a disadvantage had they not had their Bibles opened to Isaiah 29. Since Mormons are taught that Joseph Smith retrieved the gold plates from a stone box hidden in the ground, Nelson assumes that the “voice” whispering from the dust or out of the ground must be a reference to the Book of Mormon. According to Brigham Young University professor Charles R. Harrell,

Latter-day Saints go beyond the traditionally accepted allegorical meaning of this passage and its fulfillment in ancient Israel to see a literal book that came to light in the latter days

through the “unlearned” prophet Joseph Smith. “The vision of all” is spoken of in the Book of Mormon as a literal vision of all things—“a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof” (2 Ne. 27:7)—that would be recorded in a sealed book (i.e., the sealed portion of the gold plates) to come forth in the latter days. The “learned” individual is interpreted as being Charles Anthon, a professor of Greek and Latin languages at Columbia College (later Columbia University), who reportedly said he could not read the book “for it is sealed” (2 Ne. 27:15–20; Isa. 29:11). (p. 92)

Harrell disagrees with the traditional LDS understanding of these passages and concedes that “Isaiah isn’t talking about a literal book, much less one that would come forth in the future” (p. 93) Nelson, like many LDS leaders before him, ignores the key passages in Isaiah 29 that set the historical stage for what follows. While he began his conference message with verse 4, verses 1–3 state, “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.”

It can be readily seen that God is going to distress Ariel, which is another name for Jerusalem, or the City of David, where God had commanded sacrifices be made unto Him. Whether Isaiah had in mind an actual military assault on the city or was speaking metaphorically regarding Jerusalem’s spiritual blindness has been a matter of debate. However, no non-Mormon scholar sees Isaiah’s warning as a prediction regarding a future book.

Episode 15: The Book of Mormon (Ez. 37:16-17)

Ezekiel 37:16-17: “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.”

According to church leaders:

“Read Ezekiel 37:15–19 with class members. Explain that ‘the stick of Judah’ is the Bible and ‘the stick of Ephraim’ is the Book of Mormon” (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, p. 246).

“Ezekiel says that in the last days the stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim should be placed with the stick of Judah, before the eyes of the nations in the hands of the Lord, for a special purpose—to gather the house of Israel in the latter days [see Ezekiel 37:15–28]. These two records were also to be made use of in order to preach the fulness of the everlasting gospel to both Jew and Gentile; and they will stand in judgment against the generation living on the earth when they come forth” (Wilford Woodruff, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff*, 2004, p. 119. Brackets in original)

“Explain that just as Ezekiel’s vision of the Resurrection has more than one meaning, so does the prophecy of the sticks. Have students turn to Bible map 3. Remind them that Israel was divided into two kingdoms after the reign of Solomon. The southern kingdom was governed by the house of Judah, while the northern kingdom was governed by the house of Ephraim. Have students read Ezekiel 37:19–23 and look for another meaning for the sticks. Ask: What was the Lord revealing to Ezekiel? (Ephraim and Judah would someday be united in one kingdom.)” (*Old Testament Seminary Teacher Resource Manual*, 2003, p. 191)

This church manual states:

“[Referring to Ezekiel 37:15-20] The Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon affirm that Ezekiel’s prophecy deals with the Bible and the Book of Mormon being joined together. Doctrine and Covenants 27:5 teaches that the Book of Mormon is the stick of Ephraim. The Book of Mormon, in 1 Nephi 13:40–41; 2 Nephi 29:10–14; and Mormon 7:8–9 speaks of the records of the Jews and the records of the Nephites being gathered together into one” (Old Testament Student Manual 1 Kings-Malachi Religion 302, 2003, p. 283. Brackets mine).

Harrell writes:

Page 93: “The popular LDS interpretation of this passage is that the stick of Judah is the Bible while the stick of Joseph or Ephraim is the Book of Mormon.”

Page 93: “Scholars point out that each of the sticks Ezekiel refers to is no more than a piece of wood (hence the term ‘stick’), on which he was to inscribe a short phrase. It doesn’t appear to have been a scroll or writing board on which a lengthy record might be kept. . . . Many LDS scholars today concur with this contextual meaning and therefore see the traditional LDS interpretation as a ‘secondary,’ ‘revealed’ meaning.”

From *Answering Mormons Questions*, chapter 33 (“If the Book of Mormon is just a novel, then why do Isaiah and Ezekiel predict its forthcoming?”), pp. 254ff

Citing Ezekiel 37:15–20, Apostle LeGrand Richards (1886–1983) concluded,

In ancient times it was the custom to write on parchment and roll it on a stick. Therefore, when this command was given, it was the equivalent of directing that two books or records should be kept . . . Now, granting that the Bible is the stick of Judah, where is the stick of Joseph? Can anyone answer? God commanded that it should be kept to record the fulfillment of his greater promises to Joseph. It would naturally be a record kept in another land, since Joseph was to be “separate from his brethren.” It is plain from the reading of this scripture that the record of Judah, or the Holy Bible, would remain with this people, that the record of Joseph would be joined unto it, and that the two would become one. Should anyone object to God’s doing exactly what he promised Ezekiel he would do? Could this promise be fulfilled in a simpler and more perfect manner than it was through the coming forth of the Book of Mormon? . . . The two records have now been joined together, constituting a complete fulfillment of another great prophecy. Again, who could object to God’s doing the thing he promised to do? Until someone can explain where the record of Joseph is, the Book of Mormon stands unrefuted in its claim to be “the stick of Joseph.”

Understanding the Hebrew word for stick helps to clarify the message Ezekiel was trying to convey. The word used in these passages speaks of a literal piece of wood, not books or scrolls as Mormons often insist. Consider 1 Kings 17:10–12, when the prophet Elijah visits the Sidonian city of Zarephath:

So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” And she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” (esv)

The word for sticks in this passage is the same Hebrew word used in Ezekiel 37. Should it be assumed that the widow in this story was gathering books in preparation for what she thought was her final meal? There are other words for book or scroll that were available if a written document is what was meant. Another passage to consider is 2 Kings 6:1–7. During the act of cutting down a tree, an axe head flew off its handle and landed in the water. Distressed because the tool was borrowed, the man who was using the axe sought the aid of Elisha the prophet. When he learned where the axe head landed, Elisha proceeded to “cut down a stick” and cast it into the water. Amazingly, the iron axe head floated to the top. Again, the Hebrew word used in this passage is the same one used in Ezekiel 37. It is unreasonable to assume that Elisha somehow cut a book off of a tree.

The problem this presents for the Mormon interpretation of Ezekiel 37 has not gone unnoticed by Mormon apologists. Brigham Young University professor Keith H. Meservy wrote two articles for *Ensign* magazine arguing that records were also made on “wooden tablets” and that this is what the “sticks” refer to in Ezekiel 37. (“Ezekiel’s Sticks,” *Ensign*, September 1977, p. 25). In 1990, Brian E. Keck challenged this assumption:

The most recent additions to the debate are two articles by Keith Meservy, published in the September 1977 and the February 1987 issues of the *Ensign*. He provides evidence that the “sticks” referred to by Ezekiel were actually wooden writing boards—thin leaves of wood coated on one side with wax attached together with metal or leather hinges.

These writing boards were fairly common in Babylonia in the first millennium b.c. The appearance of his arguments in the official Church magazine has given prestige to his ideas, which have subsequently appeared in modified form in both Sunday School and Institute manuals. . . . Even in the 1979 LDS edition of the Bible the word “stick” in the Ezekiel passage is identified in a marginal note as: “Wooden writing tablet,” an interpretation most likely derived from Meservy’s writing (“Ezekiel 37, Sticks, and Babylonian Writing Boards: A Critical Reappraisal,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1990, p. 128).

Keck was not impressed with this LDS rebuttal.

The basic problem for Mormon exegesis and the crux of the passage for Mormon and non-Mormon scholars alike is the meaning of the Hebrew word *es*, rendered by the King James translators as “stick.” The word *es* spans the whole range of Semitic languages (Bergstrasser 1983, 217), yet its various meanings reveal extraordinary continuity between the different languages. The term generally refers to a tree, wood in general, firewood, and specific items made of wood. In Hebrew the traditional semantic range is correspondingly broad, but again the word basically means tree, wood, sticks, branches, firewood, and timber for building. Occasionally it can refer to objects made of wood, such as a pole, the handle of an axe, gallows, idols, and vessels (Brown, Driver, and Briggs 1980, 781–82). Moreover, in post-biblical Hebrew the term *es* again refers to trees, different types of wood, a pole, the gallows, and a wooden pot ladle (Jastrow 1971, 1101). Therefore, as far as our current lexical knowledge goes, the Hebrew *es* does not refer to a writing board or document (Ibid.).

Keck interprets Ezekiel’s prediction much as biblical scholars see it.

The point of the whole passage is that just as Ezekiel brought two sticks together into one hand, so God will bring back the North and South Kingdoms into their homeland, to be ruled over by one leader, a Davidic descendant. . . . By placing the Ezekiel passage into the context of the sign-form, it becomes clear that Ezekiel’s performance with the sticks was intended for the public and symbolized what God was planning to do—reunify the two kingdoms of Israel. . . . identifying the sticks of Ezekiel with Babylonian writing boards was a clever exegetical idea, but it does not hold up to a close inspection (Ibid, pp. 136-137).

Again, these passages have nothing to say about the Book of Mormon. Instead, Isaiah 29 speaks to a historical situation in Israel’s past. Ezekiel 37 illustratively predicts the coming together of two nations, Judah and Israel, which had been separated since the time of King Rehoboam.

Episode 16: Malachi 4:5-6

Malachi 4:5-6: KJV and JST: 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

According to Joseph Smith-History 2:38-39, the angel Moroni cites these verses differently:

“Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. (Smith said that) He (Moroni) also quoted the next verse differently: And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.”

Why did the angel misquote scripture? And why does Malachi 4:5-6 read the same in the Inspired Version (Joseph Smith Translation)? Could it be that the doctrine did not change until later (JST was finished in 1833)?

Apostle LeGrand Richards cited this passage and said, “To which church in all the world today can one go, other than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and be told of Elijah’s coming in fulfillment of this prophecy? His coming is of the utmost importance in the sight of God in fulfilling God’s purposes among the children of men and in establishing his latter-day kingdom” (p. 165).

Citing D&C 110:13-16, Richards explained on page 167: “When Elijah has committed into the hands of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the keys of this dispensation for the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, they proceeded to explain the new and strange doctrine of baptism for the dead to their associates and the membership of the Church. They made it plain that persons upon the earth can be baptized for their loved ones who have passed away without enjoying this privilege.”

Page 254 of *Gospel Principles* reads: “Elijah would restore the sealing powers so families could be sealed together. He would also inspire people to be concerned about their ancestors and descendants. He would also inspire people to be concerned about their ancestors and descendants.”

Harrell writes:

“Latter-day Saints view this prophecy as having been fulfilled with the coming of Elijah to the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836 (D&C 110:13-16). . . . Malachi’s prophecy, as it appears in the Old Testament, gives no indication that Elijah would restore priesthood keys or reveal sealing ordinances either for the living or the dead. . . The New Testament interprets Elijah’s coming as having been fulfilled in John the Baptist who went before Jesus ‘in the spirit and power of Elias [i.e., Elijah] . . . There is no mention of John exercising what Mormons traditionally understand as sealing powers, but then, according to LDS doctrine, he would have been unable to because he held only the Aaronic Priesthood.” (74-75)

Page 75 talks about how LDS authorities in the past have talked about how Elijah did mean John the Baptist but possibly a future appearance by a “yet-to-be-identified latter-day Elijah. . . It was generally understood that the turning of the hearts of fathers and children meant improving family relations and, in general, restoring obedience to God’s laws.”

Page 79: “Like the Old Testament, the New Testament gives little indication that priesthood authority would be restored in the latter days. Latter-day Saints, however, frequently cite Matthew 17:11, in which

Jesus states: 'Elias truly shall first come, and restore all thing' (Matt. 17:11), as proof that such a restoration was prophesied to occur. Bruce R. McConkie construed this Elias of the restoration to be a latter-day composite Elias—that is, Elias is viewed, not as a single individual, but rather as multiple individuals who came and restored priesthood keys in the latter days. Most scholars would argue, however, that Matthew is simply alluding to Malachi's prophecy of the coming of Elijah (Mal. 4:5-6). As noted in the previous chapter, Matthew is citing the Greek Septuagint, which uses the word Elias when speaking of the coming of Elijah to 'restore' the children to the fathers and the Jews to righteousness. The interpretation that Jesus himself gives of this prophecy is that the coming of *Elias* (i.e., Elijah) was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist who had already come (Matt. 17:12-13)."

Episode 17: Baptism for the Dead Part 1

Joseph Smith said: “This doctrine presents in a clear light the wisdom and mercy of God in preparing an ordinance for the salvation of the dead, being baptized by proxy, their names recorded in heaven and they judged according to the deeds done in the body. This doctrine was the burden of the scriptures. Those Saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 193. See also *Ensign*, October 2003, “The Doctrine of Temple Work,” p. 60).

Harrell writes:

- Page 346: “In expounding the doctrine of baptism for the dead in September 1842, Joseph appealed to this passage asserting that Malachi ‘had his eye fixed on the restoration of the priesthood, the glories to be revealed in the last days, and in an especial manner this most glorious of all subjects belonging to the everlasting gospel, namely the baptism for the dead’ (D&C 128:17). . . . the context of Malachi 4:5-6 doesn’t appear to have initially contemplated salvation for the dead.”

1 Peter 3:18-20: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

- Page 350: “According to the LDS interpretation, during the three days that Christ’s body lay in the tomb, he went as a spirit to minister to departed righteous spirits and empower them to preach the gospel to disobedient spirits (D&C 138:28-30). Several elements in this passage pose problems with this interpretation. First, when the New Testament speaks elsewhere of Christ being ‘quickened by the Spirit’ (uppercase ‘S’), it refers to his resurrection from the dead (see Rom. 8:11). . . . If this passage is referring to Christ’s physical resurrection, then it wasn’t as a *spirit* that he visited the spirits in prison.”
- Page 350: “A second complication with the conventional LDS interpretation is that, in 1 Peter, it was Christ himself who preached to those who ‘were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah (v. 20). This runs contrary to the current LDS view that Christ preached only to the righteous and didn’t personally go among the wicked.”
- Page 351: “Scholars note that the Greek verb *kerusso*, translated ‘preached’ in KJV 1 Peter 3:19, is better translated ‘proclaimed’ (see NRSV, or New Revised Standard Version) and is different from *euaggelizo*, the common New Testament verb for preaching *the gospel*. Thus, the NEB (New English Bible) states that Christ ‘made his proclamation to the imprisoned spirits.’”
- Page 353: “In February 1832, Joseph received a revelation giving a different understanding of 1 Peter 3:18-20. Describing those who inherit a terrestrial glory in the resurrection, Joseph states that they include ‘the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it’ (D&C 76:73-74). So instead of preaching just to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah, as suggested in 1 Peter 3:18-20 and Moses 7:57, Jesus is depicted preaching to all those who had rejected his testimony while in mortality. Presumably, this would include those in the days of Noah who rejected the commandments of God (Moses 7:33). Unlike the book of Moses, which has the

imprisoned spirits being resurrected with Christ and standing ‘on the right hand of God’ (Moses 7:57), those who receive Christ’s message in the spirit world are not depicted as coming forth at the second coming and receiving only the terrestrial kingdom, which is outside God’s presence (D&C 76:77).”

From *Answering Mormons’ Questions*, pp. 180-181:

One possible interpretation given by Christian commentators is that the verse “refers to Christ’s announcement to departed spirits of the triumph of his resurrection, declaring to them the victory he had achieved by his death and resurrection, as pointed out in the previous verse.”²¹ According to this view, the Greek word for “preached” means “proclaimed.” Even those who rejected God in their earthly lives will acknowledge the lordship of Christ, for Philippians 2:10–11 says every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. However, not all who bow their knees will be able to call Him Savior. The people described in 1 Peter 3:19 are awaiting the final judgment in the same place as the rich man in Luke 16:19–31; they are not being invited to accept a postmortem salvation.

Another popular interpretation connects 1 Peter 3:19 with the reference to Noah in verse 20. Christian commentator Gleason Archer explained that this event “took place, not when Christ descended into Hades after His death on Calvary, but by the Spirit who spoke through the mouth of Noah during the years while the ark was under construction (v. 20). Therefore v. 19 holds out no hope whatever for a ‘second chance’ for those who reject Christ during their lifetime on earth.”²² Thus, according to this interpretation, the people in Noah’s day had their chance to receive the truth while they were alive, but they rejected it and are now awaiting the final judgment.

Episode 18: Baptism for the Dead Part 2

1 Peter 4:6: “For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

Harrell writes:

- Page 351: “The assumption is that 1 Peter 4:6 ties back to 1 Peter 3:19. A footnote in the New American Bible acknowledges that the ‘dead’ in 1 Peter 4:6 ‘may be the sinners of the flood generation who are possibly referred to in 1 Peter 3:19,’ but notes that ‘many scholars think that there is no connection between these two verses, and that the dead here are Christians who have died since hearing the preaching of the gospel.’”

From *Answering Mormons’ Questions*, p. 181:

Joseph Smith claimed his vision also gave him understanding of 1 Peter 4:6, another ambiguous passage. It says in part, “For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead.” The New International Version translates the last portion of this, “the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead.” While the word *now* is not found in the original Greek, it was used by the translators because the context suggests that the preaching of the gospel had been delivered in the past to those who were now deceased. In order to support the Mormon view of a second chance to hear the gospel message and receive salvation after death, the first verb would need to be present tense (i.e., “for this cause *is* the gospel preached also to them that are dead”). It is not, which is a clear blow to the Mormon interpretation. To suggest that living people can become “saviors” of those already dead is not a Christian teaching and must therefore be rejected.

1 Corinthians 15:29 says, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”

- Page 355: “Latter-day Saints find reassurance in the general scholarly consensus that this passage indeed has reference to baptisms performed during the New Testament times on behalf of the dead.”
- Page 355: “...Paul is not endorsing the practice, though ‘at least he does not see fit to condemn it as heretical.’”
- Page 355: “It should be noted that the voice changes from ‘we’ to ‘they’ for this verse only: Else what shall ‘they’ do? And why are ‘they’ baptized for the dead? Then the shift is back to ‘we’—why stand ‘we’ in jeopardy? Could Paul be alluding to a practice that only ‘they’ (not ‘we’) were participating in?”
- Page 361: “There is no indication in the Book of Mormon that Christ introduced the doctrine of salvation for the dead during his visit to the Nephites—even though, according to LDS doctrine, he had just visited the spirits in prison and opened the door for their salvation. On the contrary, the Book of Mormon people were taught not to worry about those who die without having heard the gospel in this life since they are redeemed automatically through the Atonement. The whole notion of vicarious works for the dead seems incongruous with Book of Mormon theology.”
- Page 366: Bruce R. McConkie: “There is no such thing as a second chance to gain salvation by accepting the gospel in the spirit world after spurning, declining, or refusing to accept it in this life. It is true that there may be a second chance to hear and accept the gospel, but those

who have thus procrastinated their acceptance of the saving truths will not gain salvation in the celestial kingdom of God.’ Thus, those who reject the gospel in mortality ‘may’ have the gospel preached to them in the spirit world but cannot be saved in the celestial kingdom and therefore don’t benefit from saving ordinances performed in their behalf.”

In 1 Corinthians 15:29, the apostle Paul wrote, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” President David O. McKay (1873–1970) wrote,

“Not a few commentators have tried to explain away [this passage’s] true significance; but its context proves plainly that in the days of the apostles there existed the practice of baptism for the dead; that is, living persons were immersed in water for and in behalf of those who were dead—not who were ‘dead to sin’ but who had ‘passed to the other side.’”

Brigham Young University professor Robert Millet said, “Many non-Latter-day Saint scholars believe that in 1 Corinthians Paul was denouncing or condemning the practice of baptism for the dead as heretical. This is a strange conclusion, since Paul uses the practice to support the doctrine of the resurrection. In essence, he says, ‘Why are we performing baptism in behalf of our dead, if, as some propose, there will be no resurrection of the dead? If there is to be no resurrection, would not such baptisms be a waste of time?’”

Millet assumes that Paul was a participant in this rite. When verse 29 is dissected, though, it can be seen that Paul purposely did not use the first person *we* in this verse. Thus, Christian theologian D. A. Carson explained why this assumption is wrong:

The most plausible interpretation is that some in Corinth were getting baptized vicariously for the dead. Several factors, however, put this into perspective. Although Paul does not explicitly condemn the practice, neither does he endorse it. Several writers have offered the following analogy. Imagine a Protestant writing, “Why do they then pray for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?” No one would take this as an endorsement of the practice of praying for the dead; it is a criticism of the inconsistency of praying for the dead while holding that the dead do not rise. To make this rhetorical question an endorsement of the practice of praying for the dead, one would expect, “Why do *we* then pray for the dead?” Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 15:29 Paul preserves the more distant *they*. After all, his primary concern in 1 Corinthians 15 is the defense of the Christian doctrine of resurrection. His rhetorical question in verse 29 may simply be pointing out the inconsistency of those who deny the final resurrection, granted their rather strange baptismal practices. And they were strange.

There is no good evidence for vicarious baptism anywhere in the New Testament or among the earliest apostolic fathers. By the same token, there is no hint that this vicarious baptism (if that is what it was) was intended by the Corinthian believers to cover as many deceased people as could be named. If the practice existed at all, it may have been tied to a few people or special cases—for example, when a relative died after trusting the gospel but before being baptized. We really do not know. If it were something like that, one could understand why Paul does not make a federal case of it. In any case, Paul’s clear emphasis is that people are justified by grace *through faith*, which demands a personal response. Christian baptism is part of that personal response, even as it is a covenantal pledge. In contrast, baptism on behalf of someone who has not exercised such faith sounds like magic—of something far from Pauline thought.

Carson suggested that the reason the 1 Corinthians 15 passage is difficult to interpret is that this is the only passage in the Bible specifically mentioning “baptism for the dead.” He wrote,

The reason is not that God must say things more than once for them to be true or binding. The reason, rather, is that if something is said only once it is easily misunderstood or misapplied. When something is repeated on several occasions and in slightly different contexts, readers will enjoy a better grasp of what is meant and what is at stake. That is why the famous “baptism for the dead” passage (1 Cor. 15:29) is not unpacked at length and made a major plank in, say, the Heidelberg Catechism or the Westminster Confession. Over forty interpretations of that passage have been offered in the history of the church. Mormons are quite sure what it means, of course, but the reason why they are sure is because they are reading it in the context of other books that they claim are inspired and authoritative.¹⁸

The historical context also needs to be considered, and it reveals that baptism for the dead was not a regular practice of the Christian church.

According to Christian theologian Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “apart from a possible reference in Tertullian (*De res*, 48c), there is evidence of such a practice only among heretical groups like the Cerinthians and the Marcionites,” and neither of these groups existed when 1 Corinthians was written.¹⁹ If Doctrine and Covenants 128:17 is true when it says that baptism for the dead is the most “glorious of all subjects belonging to the everlasting gospel,” then it should be expected that the New Testament would have spoken much more about it.

Episode 19: The Godhead and Plurality of Gods (Psalm 82:6, 1 Cor. 8:4-6)

Psalm 82:6

⁶ I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

- Page 116: “While the Old Testament is traditionally seen as monotheistic, traces of polytheism can be found in early Old Testament passages. Most scholars now agree that ‘the earliest Hebrew conception of God was pluralistic’ and only later ‘evolved toward universal monotheism.’”

Harrell holds to a view called the Documentary Hypothesis, which we disagree with. For more information on this, see CARM.org at <https://carm.org/documentary-hypothesis> and <https://carm.org/answering-documentary-hypothesis>

- Pages 116-117: “A passage sometimes cited by Latter-day Saints as a reference to a plurality of Gods is Psalms (sic) 82:6 in which the seer Asaph declares, ‘I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.’ While it may be tempting to read this passage as meaning that we are all children of God and, therefore, potentially gods, it would be a misreading. Prior to this verse, Asaph acknowledges that God ‘judgeth among the gods’ (v. 1), who have dealt unjustly with the fatherless and the needy; and therefore, even though they are gods, they ‘shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.’ Scholars note that there are at least two possible meanings of the word ‘gods’ in this passage: the divine assembly of gods (described earlier) or human judges who ruled under God’s authority. In either case, it refers to being currently bearing the title ‘gods’ with whom God is displeased and therefore pronounces judgment upon them.”
- Page 117: “Interestingly, Jesus cites Psalms (sic) 82:6 to justify his divine Sonship, arguing that if the individuals in this passage merited the title ‘gods,’ then it should not be blasphemy to call (sic) himself ‘the Son of God’ (John 10:34-36). Scholars (LDS and non-LDS) generally agree that Jesus was most likely interpreting Psalms (sic) 82:6 as referring to mortals acting as God’s representatives rather than heavenly gods.”

LDS leaders explain:

- “Divinely Appointed Judges Called ‘Gods.’—In Psalm 82:6, judges invested by divine appointment are called ‘gods.’ To this scripture the Savior referred in His reply to the Jews in Solomon’s Porch. Judges so authorized officiated as the representatives of God and are honored by the exalted title ‘gods.’ Compare the similar appellation applied to Moses (Ex. 4:16; 7:1). Jesus Christ possessed divine authorization, not through the word of God transmitted to Him by man, but as an inherent attribute. The inconsistency of calling human judges ‘gods,’ and of ascribing blasphemy to the Christ who called Himself the Son of God, would have been apparent to the Jews but for their sin-darkened minds” (James Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 501).

1 Cor. 8:4-6: As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

⁵ For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

⁶ But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Harrell writes:

- Page 117: “Based on their writings, New Testament Christians seem to have inherited the monotheism taught in the late Old Testament period. As we have seen, Paul was emphatic in proclaiming the one and only true God. In spite of the clear monotheistic teachings of the New Testament during the Nauvoo period Joseph Smith drew upon several New Testament passages to support a plurality of Gods.”
- Pages 117-118: “Non-LDS scholars universally maintain that the gods to whom Paul referred were heathen gods and that he was contrasting those heathen who offer sacrifices to idols ‘that are called gods’ (v. 5) with ‘us,’ the Christians who know that there is only one God (v. 6). This view is consistent with Paul’s assertion in verse 5 that ‘there is none other God but one.’ Notwithstanding the implied meaning that ‘gods’ refers to heathen gods, Joseph was bold enough to declare, ‘I have a witness of the H.G. & a test[imony] that Paul had no allusion to the Heathen G[ods] in the text.’ It is ironic that a passage in which Paul seemingly argues against a plurality of Gods was appropriated by the Prophet to argue *for* a plurality of Gods.”

Revelation 1:6

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Harrell writes:

- Page 118: “In June 1844, the Prophet approved this verse as ‘altog[ethe]r correct in the translation’ and interpreted “his Father’ to mean God the Father’s father (i.e., Christ’s grandfather). While the expression ‘God and his Father’ may sound like two separate individuals, a common convention in the New Testament is to refer to God as the “God and Father” of Jesus Christ. Modern translations avoid the ambiguity of the KJV by rendering the expression as ‘unto his [i.e., Christ’s] God and Father,’ indicating that ‘God’ and ‘Father’ both refer to God, the Father of Jesus Christ. Joseph’s apparent misreading of this verse is not altogether surprising given the ambiguous wording in the KJV, even though such a reading seems inconsistent with New Testament theology. It is note-worthy that, when the Prophet earlier came upon this passage while translating the Bible (sometime between February 1832 and February 1833), he changed ‘God and his father’ to read ‘God, his father,’ thus making ‘his father’ merely an appositive for ‘God,’ similar to modern translations. This is one of several examples of how the Prophet read monotheism into ambiguous Bible passages early in his career and then, as though undergoing a shift in his theology, began reading a plurality of Gods into them.”
- Pages 118-119: “The early works of Joseph Smith show a clear monotheistic leaning. When a Book of Mormon prophet was asked whether there was more than one God, the answer was a resounding ‘no’ (Alma 11:28-29). The Book of Mormon repeatedly emphasizes that there is ‘one God’ (see, for example, 2 Ne. 31:21; Mosiah 15:4-5; Morm. 7:7). After the publication of the Book of Mormon, Joseph began revising the Bible and seems to have ‘consciously

attempted to remove all references to a plurality of Gods. . . . Similarly, monotheism appears to be the underlying theology in the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants until at least 1839.”

Episode 20: Was God once a man?

“The doctrine that God was once a man and has progressed to become a God is unique to this Church. How do you feel, knowing that God, through His own experience, ‘knows all that we know regarding the toils [and] sufferings’ of mortality?” (Brigham Young, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, 1997, p. 34. Brackets in original).

“The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches that man is an eternal being, made in the image and likeness of God. ...These truths are generally well understood by Latter-day Saints. Less well understood, however, is the fact that God is an exalted man who once lived on an earth and underwent experiences of mortality. The great prophet Joseph Smith refers to this as ‘the great secret’” (*Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, 1976, p. 129. Ellipsis mine).

Harrell writes:

- Page 127: “In his famous King Follett discourse (June 1844), Joseph repudiated the traditional belief in God’s eternity stating, ‘We suppose[e] that God was God from eternity. I will refute that idea.’ The Prophet then declared, ‘God himself the father of us all dwelt on an earth [the] same as J[esu]s himself did & I will show it form the Bible.’ He continued: ‘The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again.’”
- Page 127: “This scriptural inference deserves closer examination. The Prophet is combining two passages, John 5:26 and John 10:17-18, and taking considerable liberty with the text. These verses, as they stand, provide little support for a belief that the Father laid down his life and took it up again. John 5:26 merely states, ‘For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.’ Regarding Jesus’s power to lay down his life and take it again, John 10:17 has Jesus saying, ‘I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.’ These passages seem to merely indicate that God imbued Jesus with power over death and commanded him to use this power. Nothing in the passage suggests that God himself used these powers on his own behalf in some past eon of time.”
- Page 128: “The second passage that Joseph cited as proof, by inference, that God was once mortal is John 5:19: ‘The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.’ Giving his own version of this passage, the Prophet stated, ‘What did Jesus do[?] Why I do the things that I saw the father do when worlds came into existence. I saw the father work out a kingdom with fear and trembling and I can do the same.’ Though John 5:19 does not state clearly the sense in which Jesus ‘seeth’ the works of the Father, the present tense of the verbs (he does what he sees the Father do) suggests that the Son’s actions were simultaneous with the Father’s. That is, Jesus’s only desire was to carry out the will of his Father, thus making him the Father’s instrument. Jesus’s remark, ‘The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works’ (John 14:9), captures the essence of this idea. Thus, this passage seems only to imply that Jesus and his Father were one in their work, not that Jesus walked in the footsteps that his Father has previously walked.”
- Page 128: “When Mormons today read passages proclaiming that God is ‘from everlasting to everlasting’ (Moro. 7:22), one interpretation given is that God had an eternal existence as an

intelligence and eventually became a human being and then a God. But this doesn't really address the several scriptures cited above that clearly suggests that God was God from all eternity."

- Page 128: "Eternity has also been interpreted to mean 'that existence gained by exalted beings,' rather than duration of existence. Thus, 'from eternity to eternity' is an expression that can be applied to any being who 'has joined the ranks of eternal [i.e., exalted] beings.'"
- Page 128: "One wonders if any of these explanations was necessary for the original audience of the scriptures who seemed to be comfortable taking the eternity of God at face value."

Episode 21: The Preexistence

Citations from LDS leaders on Preexistence

“We lived before we came here and our birth into this world was the reward of having kept our first estate” (George Albert Smith, *Conference Reports*, October 1926, p. 102).

“We believe that we are here because we kept our first estate and earned the privilege of coming to earth. We believe that our very existence is a reward for our faithfulness before we came here, and that we are enjoying the fruits of our efforts in the spirit world” (George Albert Smith, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith*, 2011, pp. 70-71).

“We have reason to believe that all who were privileged to come to this mortal world came because they were entitled by pre-mortal qualifications” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* 4:153).

Harrell explains:

- Page 211: “Today, the predominant LDS view of the human spirit includes the belief that we existed prior to our spirit birth as some form of intelligence. There is a difference of opinion, however, as to whether we always existed as individual intelligences or were part of a pool of intelligence that became individuated through spirit birth.”
- Page 212: “A distinctive LDS teaching today regarding preexistence is that all living things—humans, animals, plant life, and even the earth itself—had a preexistence as spirits. The idea that the trillions upon trillions of insects and noxious weeds have spirits that existed for aeons prior to their fleeting and seemingly insignificant existence on earth is a curious thought. Even more astounding is the notion that they will be resurrected to immortal glory at some unspecified time in the future.”
- **Jeremiah 1:5:** “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

Example from a church manual

- “We lived with Heavenly Father before we came to earth. We are His spirit children, and He wants us to have the same joy that He has by becoming like Him (see Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 8:16; Hebrews 12:9)” (*Old Testament Seminary Teacher Resource Manual*, 2003, p. 16).

Harrell writes:

- Page 203: “Latter-day Saints adduce that, since God ‘knew’ and ‘ordained’ Jeremiah before he was born, he therefore must have existed before his birth. However, most biblical scholars interpret this passage as having reference to only *ideal* preexistence. LDS scholar Lowell L. Bennion concurs, averring that Jeremiah 1:5, as well as other biblical passages which Mormons interpret as referring to man’s preexistence, ‘may be interpreted also as meaning God’s foreknowledge rather than man’s preexistence.’ He further observes that ‘a pre-earth life for man . . . cannot be clearly and indubitably established by the Bible.’”
- **Job. 38:4-7:** “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou

hast understanding. 5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Example from a church manual

- “When we lived as spirit children with our heavenly parents, our Heavenly Father told us about His plan for us to become more like Him. We shouted for joy when we heard His plan (see Job 38:7)” (*Gospel Principles*, 2009, p. 23).

Harrell responds:

- Page 203: “Joseph Smith used this passage as ‘evidence that Job was in existence somewhere at that time.’ Otherwise, he reasoned, why would God ask where Job was? Most biblical scholars, however, see God’s question as rhetorical and intended to highlight the fact that Job was nowhere around during the creation. The whole tenor of the Lord’s query, when read in context with the entire chapter, is to emphasize the insignificance and fleeting nature of human existence.”
- Pages 203-204: “It is interesting that the Prophet referred to this passage as proof of preexistence because of Job’s presumed existence at the foundation of the world but gave no indication that the ‘sons of God’ were preexistent spirits. This is unlikely because he didn’t view them as spirit children of God.”
- John 9:2: “And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Harold B. Lee used this verse to explain that this was why the priesthood ban on the blacks was necessary:

“There is no truth more plainly taught in the Gospel than that our condition in the next world will depend upon the kind of lives we live here. ‘All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.’ (John 5:28-29.) Is it not just as reasonable to suppose that the conditions in which we now live have been determined by the kind of lives we lived in the pre-existent world of spirits? That the apostles understood this principle is indicated by their question to the Master when the man who was blind from his birth was healed of his blindness, ‘Master, who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?’ (John 9:2.) Now perhaps you will have a partial answer to some of your questions as to why, if God is a just Father, that some of his children are born of an enlightened race and in a time when the Gospel is upon the earth, while others are born of a heathen parentage in a benighted, backward country; and still others are born to parents who have the mark of a black skin with which the seed of Cain were cursed and whose descendants were to be denied the rights of the priesthood of God” (Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living*, pp. 164-165).

Harrell writes:

- Page 204: “Like the Old Testament, the New Testament seems to depict human existence as beginning in this life with no explicit mention of a pre-earth life. Nowhere are callings, activities, or outcomes in this life attributed by New Testament writers to a preexistent state.”

- Page 204: “A common LDS interpretation is that the very fact that the disciples asked the question presupposes a belief in the preexistence of spirits. This, however, is not the only reasonable interpretation of this passage. . . .In sum, there were several beliefs regarding ways an individual might commit sin prior to birth making it difficult to state with certainty what the underlying supposition was of Jesus’s inquirers. Even if Jesus’s inquirers did have in mind sins committed in the preexistence, there is no evidence that Jesus himself sanctioned the belief. The only explanation he gave for the man’s blindness was so ‘the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3).

Episodes 22 and 23: Jesus as “Firstborn”

Citation from LDS Leaders

Harrell writes:

- Page 168: “A distinctive LDS doctrine is that Christ was not only the offspring of God as a spirit in the preexistence, like all of God’s other children, but he was also the firstborn spirit ‘to whom all others are juniors.’ . . . Thus, Christ is often referred to by Mormons as ‘our elder brother.’”

Citations from church leaders:

- “The Father of Jesus is our Father also. Jesus Himself taught this truth, when He instructed His disciples how to pray: ‘Our Father which art in heaven,’ etc. Jesus, however, is the firstborn among all the sons of God—the first begotten in the spirit, and the only begotten in the flesh. He is our elder brother, and we, like Him, are in the image of God” (Joseph F. Smith, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, 1998, p. 335).
- “Jesus was born of heavenly parents in a premortal world—he was the firstborn of our Heavenly Father” (Robert D. Hales, “Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned to Joy,” *Ensign* (Conference Edition), November 1983, p. 67).
- “Jesus was the firstborn spirit child of God the Father and thus the recipient of the birthright of the royal family. As such, and in that premortal realm, he was the Elder Brother of all of the spirit sons and daughters of the Father” (BYU Professor Emeritus Robert L. Millet, *A Different Jesus? The Christ of the Latter-day Saints*, p. 20).
- “On first hearing, the doctrine that Lucifer and our Lord, Jesus Christ, are brothers may seem surprising to some—especially to those unacquainted with latter-day revelations. But both the scriptures and the prophets affirm that Jesus Christ and Lucifer are indeed offspring of our Heavenly Father and, therefore, spirit brothers. Jesus Christ was with the Father from the beginning. Lucifer, too, was an angel ‘who was in authority in the presence of God,’ a ‘son of the morning.’ (See Isa. 14:12; D&C 76:25–27.) Both Jesus and Lucifer were strong leaders with great knowledge and influence. But as the Firstborn of the Father, Jesus was Lucifer’s older brother. (See Col. 1:15; D&C 93:21.)” (Jess L. Christensen, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, June 1986, p. 25).
- “*Christ worked out his own salvation by worshipping the Father.* After the Firstborn of the Father, while yet a spirit being, had gained power and intelligence that made him like unto God; after he had become, under the Father, the Creator of worlds without number; after he had reigned on the throne of eternal power as the Lord Omnipotent—after all this he yet had to gain a mortal and then an immortal body” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, 1966, p. 61. Italics in original).
- “Christ himself, the Firstborn of the Father, rose to a state of glory and exaltation before he was ever suckled at Mary’s breast” (Bruce R. McConkie, “The Salvation of Little Children,” *Ensign*, April 1977, p. 3).

- “We read in modern revelation that Jesus Christ was and is our elder brother, the ‘Firstborn’ unto the Father. We accept, as Latter-day Saints, the teachings of the prophets to the effect that Jesus of Nazareth was the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father in the flesh; therefore, the revelation I referred to points back to a previous birth, a birth in the spirit world. You and I were sons and daughters of our Eternal Parents in the spirit world. In fact, all the people in this world were of that family, and Jesus Christ was the Firstborn” (Milton R. Hunter, *Conference Reports*, October 1949, p. 69).
- Page 168: “The New Testament contains several references to Christ as the firstborn of God in letters attributed to Paul that some Latter-day Saints understand to mean the ‘firstborn of all of God’s spirit children.’ But when examined carefully, Paul’s teachings show little evidence of a belief that Christ was the firstborn spirit in the preexistence.”
- Romans 8:29: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”
- Page 168: “One instance of Christ’s designation as the firstborn is in Romans 8:29: ‘For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.’ President Joseph F. Smith interpreted this passage as meaning that ‘the spirits who were juniors to Christ were predestined to be born in the spirit in the image of their Elder Brother.’ According to scholars, however, Paul is not referring to premortal spirit birth, but to Christ becoming the firstborn in attaining God’s glory, a status which would subsequently be attained by ‘many brethren’ (i.e., disciples). These brethren were predestined ‘to be conformed’ [not born] to the image of his Son’ (v. 29), meaning that they would become sons of God in the same adoptive sense in which Christ was seen by Paul as God’s son (see Rom. 8:19). Here the emphasis seems to be on Jesus as the forerunner of salvation, not on his order of premortal birth.”
- Hebrews 1:6: “And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.”
 - Page 169: “This doesn’t expressly state that Christ is the ‘firstbegotten’ in the sense of being the first born spirit of God. Notably, this passage is actually adapted from a text that had reference to Adam’s physical creation and had no reference at all to Christ.”
 - Page 169: “Several places in the New Testament where Christ is designated as the ‘firstborn’ have unmistakable reference to his preeminence in the resurrection of the dead.”
 - Colossians 1:18: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”
 - Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

- Colossians 1:15: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.”

Harrell writes:

- Page 169: “The next verse, however, explains: ‘For by him were all things created. . . . Christ, as the creative agent of ‘all things,’ is given the preeminent designation ‘firstborn.’”
- Page 169: “Significantly, the NIV translates Colossians 1:15 to read that Christ is the ‘firstborn over all creation,’ thus removing any sense of ‘firstborn’ being a reference to order of birth, much less spirit birth.”
- Page 169: “For Jesus to be the firstborn spirit would imply that other spirits would have been subsequently born; but for Paul, there are no subsequent spirit births because ‘all things’ (everyone and everything) are the creation of Christ.”
- Pages 169-170: “...in the New Testament Christ is the firstborn in the sense of (1) being prior to and the source of all creation; (2) being the first to receive exaltation and glory; and (3) being the first to rise from the dead, ‘that in all things he might have the preeminence’ (Col. 1:18).”
- Page 170: “Neither the Book of Mormon nor the Pearl of Great Price refers to Christ as the Firstborn. The only express mention of Christ being the Firstborn in any latter-day scripture is in Doctrine and Covenants 93:21 where Christ declares, ‘And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn.’ Notably, this verse doesn’t say he was the firstborn *spirit* in the preexistence but simply that he *is* the firstborn—seemingly indicating his current favored status with God, not unlike the way Israel was anciently referred to as God’s firstborn (ex. 4:22). Moreover, those who are spiritually born through Christ share the same glory or favored status as the firstborn. Thus, Doctrine and Covenants 93:22 reads, ‘And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn.’ Earlier revelations also spoke of the ‘glory . . . of the church of the Firstborn’ (D&C 88:5; see also 76:71) prepared for those who inherit the same glory as Christ. One should not automatically assume, therefore, that the designation of Christ as the Firstborn in Doctrine and Covenants 93 is an affirmation of his status as the firstborn spirit child of God in the preexistence. Indeed, the Mormon concept of spirit birth wouldn’t be articulated in any recognizable way for at least another decade.”
- Page 170: “The concept seemingly expressed in Doctrine and Covenants 93 also finds its way into Joseph’s revision of Romans 8:28-29. As noted above, scholars generally interpret this passage as a declaration that Christ was the ‘firstborn’ in receiving God’s glory and those who become his disciples inherit the same glory, thus making Christ ‘the firstborn’ in receiving God’s glory and those who become his disciples inherit the same glory, thus making Christ ‘the firstborn among many brethren’ (v. 29). The JST reinforces this interpretation: ‘For him [Jesus] whom he [the Father] did foreknow, he [the Father] also did predestinate to be conformed to his [the Father’s] own

image, that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren' (JST Rom. 8:29). The image to which Christ was made to conform was God's glorious image."

- Page 170: "The doctrine that Christ was the firstborn spirit child of God doesn't appear in LDS teachings until after Joseph Smith and was part of the larger doctrine of spirit birth that was beginning to take shape in the latter part of 1844. The first documented public reference to spirit birth, which also alludes to Christ as 'our Brother, comes from Orson Pratt's *Prophetic Almanac* for 1845."

Episode 24: Eternal Marriage

Harrell writes:

- Page 315: “Marriage is depicted in the Old Testament as a culturally important practice, but there is no mention of its continuation beyond the grave.”
- Page 316: “In the New Testament, marriage is not only excluded as a practice having any saving merit, but at times it is even denigrated. Though he opposed divorce, Jesus never went on record as proclaiming the sanctity of marriage and family and, in fact, stated that he had come to set family members against one another (Matt. 10:35-37).”
- Page 316: “The only marriage extolled in the New Testament is the spiritual marriage of the believer to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:2).”
- Page 316: “According to non-LDS biblical scholars, Jesus didn’t see marriage as something that would extend into the next life. They cite as evidence Mark 12:18-25...”

18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

Why did Paul seem to minimize the role of marriage if marriage? According to 1 Corinthians 7:

27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. 33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.

Harrell writes:

- Pages 316-317: “The non-LDS explanation of this passage is that Christ is pointing out the absurdity of their own inquisition, stating that such a hypothetical situation as this doesn’t disprove the resurrection because life in the hereafter is not going to be like earth life; there is no marriage, but rather all become as the angels. . . . Christ’s response to the Sadducees was left unmodified in the JST, although Doctrine and Covenants 132:15-16 adds the proviso that is only those who are not married for all eternity by the proper priesthood authority that will become as angels and remain single. All others become gods and their marriage continues.”
- Page 317: “Joseph F. Smith explained Christ’s response in 1912: ‘Christ understood the principle [of eternal marriage], but he did not cast his pearls before the swine that tempted him.’ Thus, Christ refused to give the Sadducees a real answer. A few decades later, Joseph Fielding Smith turned the Sadducees’ question around to make it an inquiry expressly related to eternal marriage rather than a hypothetical question to disprove the resurrection. He

- contended that the Sadducees were fully aware that Christ preached eternal marriage, 'otherwise they never would have presented the question to the Savior.' These various interpretations all achieve reconciliation between Christ's response to the Sadducees and the LDS doctrine of eternal marriage, though it is uncertain whether any one of them reflects the original intent of the passage."
- Page 317: "A New Testament passage Latter-day Saints often cite as teaching eternal marriage is 1 Corinthians 11. Here Paul gives a lengthy sermon on why women should have their heads covered when they prophesy and pray, basically explaining that it symbolizes woman's subordination to man (1 Cor. 11:1-10). To ensure that the Corinthian saints don't take this to mean that men are superior to women, Paul immediately follows with: 'Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord' (v. 11). Latter-day Saints have traditionally interpreted this last verse to mean that man and woman must be eternally joined in marriage to stand approved before the Lord. There is no express mention, however, of marriage in Paul's exposition as the context of his remarks is male and female relationships and customs in the church. . . . There is no indication that Paul was looking to the hereafter or proclaiming marriage to be a requirement for obtaining eternal life."
 - Page 318: "...the concept of eternal marriage isn't found anywhere in the Book of Mormon or other Latter-day scripture prior to 1843. It was in Nauvoo, in the summer of 1843, that Joseph Smith formally introduced the 'new and everlasting covenant of marriage' (D&C 132), which initially entailed plural marriage."
 - Page 319: "Joseph took the first of his at least thirty-three documented plural wives (Fanny Alger) as early as 1836. Notably, nine out of the first eleven wives Joseph married were already married and cohabiting with their husbands, most of whom were faithful Mormons. This means polygamy initially allowed for polyandry, or the marriage of a woman to multiple husbands (though only one for eternity)."
 - Page 319: "Many saints in Nauvoo resisted plural marriage, but the conviction that it was a command from God and essential to one's exaltation persuaded the more faithful to comply . . . Thus, it was firmly held and fervently taught through much of the latter-half of the nineteenth century that plural marriage, at least when in force, was essential to exaltation. Marriage to only one wife was widely regarded by church leaders as being insufficient to qualify a man for the highest kingdom in the celestial world."
 - Pages 319-320: "Today the doctrine of plural marriage is seldom discussed in Church publications, and its significance and practice in early LDS history are sometimes marginalized. Church authorities no longer maintain that plural marriage is required for exaltation, but instead assert that a husband can be exalted with only a single wife. Although Bruce R. McConkie wrote in Mormon Doctrine that polygamy would 'obviously . . . commence again after the Second Coming of the Son of Man and the ushering in of the millennium,' LDS commentators today generally refrain from speculating on the future practice of polygamy. Interestingly, polygamy is still practiced in the Church for the afterlife. A man who remarries after being widowed, for example, is permitted to be sealed to his new wife in the temple and is therefore married for all eternity to both wives."

Episode 25: Is Mormonism the only way?

- Page 503: “Since its inception, many Mormons have taken an exclusivist stance towards other belief systems, acknowledging that, while other religions have a portion of the truth (mingled with error), only Mormonism contains the full and undiluted truth. This has sometimes led to feelings, and certainly an external perception, of doctrinal superiority and elitism among Latter-day Saints. But if Mormon theology is itself still evolving and partially reflects the imperfect understanding of its expounders, the fallacy of theological exclusivity should be apparent. There is nothing wrong with proclaiming one’s church to be ‘true’ in the sense of it being sanctioned and even led by God, but it doesn’t necessarily follow that all the doctrines taught in the church are *ipso facto* the absolute truth. And even if Mormonism does possess more of the correct pieces of the theological puzzle than other religions, it certainly doesn’t warrant an attitude of theological exclusivity or superiority.”

LDS leaders have taught that they have truth. Otherwise, what does a Great Apostasy really mean?

- “If you will follow the leadership of the Lord, and those whom the Lord sustains, you will not fall away into darkness, lose the light, transgress the laws of God, and forfeit your privileges that he is so anxious that all of us should enjoy. There is only one pathway of safety for me in this day and that is to follow those whom the Lord has appointed to lead. I may have my own ideas and opinions, I may set up my own judgment with reference to things, but I know that when my judgment conflicts with the teachings of those that the Lord has given to us to point the way, I should change my course. If I desire salvation I will follow the leaders that our Heavenly Father has given to us, as long as he sustains them” (George Albert Smith, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith*, 2011, p. 60).
- “The moment a man says he will not submit to the legally constituted authority of the Church, whether it be the teachers, the bishopric, the high council, his quorum, or the First Presidency, and in his heart confirms it and carries it out, that moment he cuts himself off from the privileges and blessings of the Priesthood and Church, and severs himself from the people of God, for he ignores the authority that the Lord has instituted in his Church” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 1986, p. 45. See also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, p. 365).

Harrell writes:

- Page 503: “A similar exclusivist attitude is sometimes seen with respect to spirituality. Many Latter-day Saints have the impression that they alone have the ‘gift’ of the Holy Ghost, since only LDS Melchizedek priesthood bearers can confer this gift. Consequently, members presume that they are—or at least should be—more spiritual than non-Latter-day Saints. Saints who interact with other faithful Christians soon realize, however, that there are many good people who are not only as exemplary in Christian living as Latter-day Saints, but also have comparable spiritual experiences.”

The Holy Ghost is only bestowed on those who are baptized and confirmed in the LDS Church and then those people obey the commandments:

“There is no greater gift that a person can earn and enjoy for himself, in mortality, than the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gift is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead, and

which gift is actually enjoyed only on condition of individual righteousness” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Conference Reports*, April 1953, p. 76).

“When we are confirmed, we are given the *right* to the companionship of the Holy Ghost, but it is a right that we must continue to earn through obedience and worthiness” (Joseph B. Wirthlin, “The Unspeakable Gift,” *Liahona*, May 2003, p. 27. Italics in original).

Harrell writes:

- Page 504: “The point to be made is that doctrines, just like spiritual experiences, don’t have to originate in the LDS Church to be legitimate or have theological value. There is so much that Mormons can learn from the theological insights of those in other faiths.”
- Page 505: “Although current LDS doctrines are unlikely to undergo radical change, subtle shifts in emphasis and interpretation will undoubtedly influence the way they are understood (just as in the past), especially as more figurative meanings are applied.”