

Margin Notes for Mormons

Bible Commentary

For the Salvation of the Mormon Lost

Lance Earl

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INTRODUCTION

I begin most days with a cup of coffee and quality time in God's Word. This is the first and essential step in my daily communion with God.

There are other times when I hear or see or hear something that drives me back to the Bible for examination and/or clarification.

Finally, there are many among the Mormon people who ask questions or issue challenges. The same questions tend to rise again and a gain. To avoid writing the same answer repeatedly for those who inquire, I wite my response here and share as the need arises.

To assist individuals find answers to their questions, I include their name in the "Answers" section of the index. I create the index reference using the first two letters of the person's first and last names. Additionally, I include the first two letters of the person's city of residence. For example, Joseph Smith from Nauvoo would be referenced with "josmna". When relevant components of the index are unavailable, I will create the entire six character index using available information.

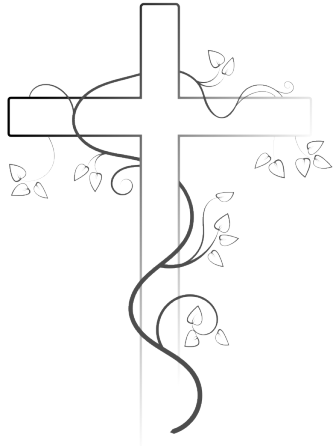
This daily habit of study and writing is for me, a lifesaver. In miraculous ways, it keeps me centered and grounded in Christ. I pray this work will be of value to you as well.



Part I

OLD TESTAMENT

Prophesy of Messiah



CHAPTER

ONE

GENESIS

Genesis 3:2 - *Coats of Skins*

Lance: Genesis 3:2: Index this chapter

Lance: Genesis 3:2: Hemmingway

Genesis 3:21, KJV

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Have you ever arrived late to a play, missing the first act? If you have, you probably struggled to understand everything that followed. As a general rule, the context provided in Act 1 is essential to comprehending the balance of the production. In Act 1, the playwright establishes key players, personal relationships, and background information. Miss this act and you will likely struggle with everything that follows.

Imagine if someone presented the Bible as a play.

1.1 Act 1, The Garden of Eden

In this act, you would see a personal relationship between God and those He created in His image. You would hear God forbid Adam and Eve from partaking of forbidden fruit, and their eventual fall. In disbelief, you would see their foolish attempt to cover their nakedness with fig leaves.

Finally, Adam and Eve would appear in coats of skins prepared by God. And with that, the curtain closes, signifying the end of Act 1.

1.2 Act 2, Prophesy and Fulfillment

1.2.1 The Mormon Interpretation

Until my sixtieth birthday, I only knew the Mormon understanding of Genesis 3:21. The following instruction is familiar to most Mormon men and women, as it is a central to the temple endowment ceremony.

> You have had a Garment placed upon you, which you were informed represents the garment given to Adam and Eve when they were found naked in the Garden of Eden, and which is called the 'Garment of the Holy Priesthood.' This you were instructed to wear throughout your life. You were informed that it will be a shield and a protection to you inasmuch as you do not defile it and if you are true and faithful to your covenants
>
> *–Post-1990 LDS Endowment Ceremony*

Having received this instruction, I understood that the coats of skins were no more significant than underwear with protective powers. I never gave this interpretation a second thought. Instead, I accepted it without investigation.

1.2.2 The Biblical Interpretation

God expressed His desire for all people to be saved.[1] The rebellion of Adam and Eve was counter to His desire.

The message of the gospel is that only the shed blood of a perfect lamb can cover the sins of men.[2] So, God prepared the first sacrifice in the Garden of

[1] *Bible*, 1 Timothy 2:4.
[2] *Bible*, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Eden. A perfect sacrificial animal from that perfect garden died to cover the sins of Adam and Eve. In this, we see the first Old Testament prophecy of Calvary.

Calvary appears again at the Passover. The shed blood of a perfect lamb saved God's people, Israel.[3] Passover, along with its feast and sacrifices, continued annually as a continual prophecy of Calvary.

Yom Kippur was practiced annually for 400 years, in the tabernacle and later in the Temple at Jerusalem. This ceremony involved a sacrifice to cover the sins of the Israelite people. Each year, the High Priest dipped his finger in the shed blood of a perfect sacrifice. This blood was sprinkled seven times between the two angels on the Mercy Seat.[4]

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mary looked into the empty tomb. She saw an angel sitting where Jesus' head had rested and another where they laid His feet. Think of the wonderful similarities between this and the cover of the Mercy Seat. The platform between the angels would surely have been stained with the shed blood of Jesus. In fulfillment of Yom Kippur, blood was spilled from seven named parts of Jesus' body. Blood spilled from His back because of the scourging; from the wounds caused by the crown placed on His head; from His left hand and right, from both His feet; and finally, from His side.[5] As the High Priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood seven times, the Bible teaches of saving blood shed from seven wounds.

Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection fulfilled all these Old Testament prophases. In them we see a pattern of God inviting every man, woman, boy, and girl to be saved. We see a repeating pattern of salvation. We see evidence of God's offer of salvation from the first moment or earthly sin.

1.3 Act 3, Redemption

In the last passages of Revelation, we see God and man reunited as at first.

[3] *Bible*, Exodus 12:5.
[4] *Bible*, Leviticus 16:14.
[5] *Bible*, John 20:11-18.

1.4 Conclusion

Proper hermeneutics demand that the interpretation of any passage must be based on harmony with the whole Word of God.

Is it most likely that Genesis 3:21 is the first passage about salvation through the shed blood of a perfect lamb? Does it follow that God would help us understand with multiple examples of shed blood as a covering for sin? Is it a coincidence that these examples dovetail so nicely with Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary?

Or, was God most concerned with underpants?

For sixty years I believed the underpants narrative. It was as if I had missed the first act and therefore did not understand the rest of the play.

More times than a few I have tried to share this with the Mormon people. More often than not, they refuse even to listen and my heart breaks for them.

CHAPTER

TWO

LEVITICUS

Leviticus 10:1-2 - *Strange Fire*

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Draft Notice

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Leviticus 10:1-2, KJV

[1]And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. [2]And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

The Bible is unclear about the exact actions of Nadab and Abihu. What is known is that they went beyond what God had commanded and authorized. They took sacred temple matters into their own hands, and it cost them their lives.

I believe the same is true of us today. When we undertake to remake the nature of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, or the means of our salvation, we are playing with strange fire. Death will surely follow. Under the old covenant, death was instant and literal. Under the new covenant, death is the second death,[1] eternal suffering.

2.0.1 Mormon Covenants

I received a message from a friend who is a devout Mormon.

> Everything in the Church revolves around Jesus Christ. So much so, that we make covenants to follow Jesus. I know you reject these covenants and you would have me believe these covenants disqualify me from receiving salvation. However, in the spirit of "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) these covenants include doing our best to be obedient to Jesus, to be willing to sacrifice and give up our personal ungodly desires to follow Him, to accept that we need to repent, to live a chaste life, in short, to dedicate our lives to Him to the best of our ability. All of this we freely do because we love Him and want to follow Him.
>
> *–Anonymous Mormon Gentleman*

2.0.2 Show Me Restored Temple Practices in Mormon Temples

The following is my reply to this Mormon friend. It is not meant to offend, but it is bold because his statement demands absolute boldness.

Since the beginning, the temple of God can be divided into three distinct periods.

- The wilderness period where the temple was portable.

[1] *Bible*, Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 20:8 & 20:14.

- The first temple period (Solomon's temple)
- The second temple period (The temple rebuilt by Herod).

From Moses until Jesus, we have a record of every activity authorized by God in His temple. We know exactly what was done and how it ALL pointed to the promised Messiah.

You claim to have the restored gospel. So I ask, what ancient temple practices have you restored in Mormon temples? Will you show me please.

1. Show me where men and women, regardless of tribe, were washed and anointed as priests and priestesses.
2. Show me where all the worthy Jews, regardless of tribe, entered the temple to make covenants, some with God and some with a corporation that was the ancient church.
3. Show me where men and women, regardless of tribe, had practice tests so they can someday pass the final exam and earn heaven.
4. Show me where children, regardless of tribe, entered the temple to perform proxy baptisms.
5. Show me where couples, regardless of tribe, were married for time and all eternity.
6. Show me where children, regardless of tribe, were sealed to their parents for time and all eternity.
7. Show me where Jewish men and women, regardless of tribe, served as temple ordinance workers.
8. Show me where Isaiah or any other prophet was visited in the temple by a group of dead secular world leaders who demanded that their temple work be completed.
9. Show me where ancient Jews did saving temple ordinances for Pharaoh as the Mormons did for Hitler.
10. Show me a time when the Jews had more than one High Priest who performed ordinances in the temple.

11. After God tore the temple veil from top to bottom, show me where He commanded the people to hang thousands of new vials in hundreds of temples.

Yes, please show me how the Mormon church has restored what God first established among his people. Because you can't, I submit that this is the most obvious and provable evidence that nothing was restored and everything was polluted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Question a Mormon

- Can you provide evidence that Mormon temple ordinances are a restoration of ancient practices?
- Can you prove Mormon temple ordinances are not ***strange fire***?
- If ***strange fire*** results in death, how will you be saved?

CHAPTER

THREE

DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy 17:17 - *Plural Wives for Kings*

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Draft Notice

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Lance: Deuteronomy 17:17: Clear from Draft

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Deuteronomy 17:17a, BSB

He must not take many wives for himself, lest his heart go astray . . .

A dear friend posted a list of Joseph Smith's wives to social media. As per the common practice of the Mormon people, many objected with a whitewashed

response that acknowledges little and ignores much. In part, one antagonist wrote...

> This is not the gotcha you seem to think it is. The Church has already acknowledged for years that Joseph Smith practiced plural marriage. That is not being hidden.
>
> *–Anonymous Mormon*

What Anonymous Mormon said is true. Perhaps he can say, "this is no harm." I, however, would challenge his assertion. Sometimes a lie is formed by the spoken word. At other times, it can be communicated by what is not said. In this case, Anonymous Mormon lied profusely by omitting much. Modern Mormon teachings agree.

> A lie can be effectively communicated without words ever being spoken. Sometimes a nod of the head or silence can deceive. Recommending a questionable business investment, making a false entry in a ledger, devious use of flattery, or failure to divulge all pertinent facts are a few other ways to communicate the lie.
>
> *–Marvin J.Ashton,* This Is No Harm

3.0.1 Exposing the Omission

Leaders of *the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* insist that God's revealed truth was lost after Jesus' crucifixion and the deaths of His Apostles. The church further claims God restored every lost truth through the Prophet Joseph Smith.[1]

If the church has been fully restored, as claimed, we can assume it includes every doctrine and principle ever revealed by God. But, if it includes less[2] or more,[3] it cannot be God's church.

You cannot put original hubcaps on a demolition derby veteran and call your limited work a full restoration. I believe Joseph Smith and Anonymous Mormon did exactly that. They modified God's revealed truth by omitting

[1] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *Restoration of the Church.* URL: `https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/restoration-of-the-church?lang=eng`.

[2] *Bible*, Revelation 22:19.

[3] *Bible*, Revelation 22:18.

important facts regarding Smith's activities and the taking of plural wives. By so doing, they took away from the word of God and lied by omission.

Joseph Smith established the Council of Fifty, a theocratic body to govern the earth.[4] In that council, Smith was anointed Prophet, Priest and King. The Bible affirms that Jesus is the fulfillment of all three: as Prophet, He reveals God's will and speaks with divine authority; as Priest, He offered Himself as the final sacrifice and intercedes for humanity; and as King, He reigns over the kingdom of God.

This was not the first time Joseph smith claimed to be God. In fact, this was one more example of him aspiring to take upon himself power and authority that belong to God alone.

Presuming himself to be a king, Joseph Smith bound himself by the commandment to not take many wives. Smith ignored this commandment and thereby took away from the Word of God.[5]

The Bible forbids any man from coveting his neighbor's wife. Smith could never have claimed ignorance regarding this proabortion, for it is contained in the *Ten Commandments*. With blatant disregard for God in this matter, Smith married thirteen women while they were his neighbor's wives. The church acknowledges this is the truth.[6]

God forbids any man from taking sister pairs to be his wives,[7] or taking as wives a mother and her daughter.[8] Smith broke each of these commandments as frequently as he was able.

Above all else, Smith ignored God's true pattern for marriage.[9] Emma, the only legal wife of Joseph Smith, had every right to expect he would cherish, protect, and give himself to only her.

> Husbands must dwell with their wives in an understanding way, treating them as equal heirs of God's grace and honoring them as the "weaker vessel"
> *–1 Peter 3:7, KJV*

[4] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *Council of Fifty*. Joseph Smith Papers, 1844-1846.

[5] *Bible*, Leviticus 17:17.

[6] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo*. URL: `www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/book-of-mormon-translation`.

[7] *Bible*, Leviticus 18:18.

[8] *Bible*, Leviticus 18:17.

[9] *Bible*, Genesis 2:24.

Instead of cherishing Emma, Smith placed the desires of his flesh above her needs. He could have loved her and God more than self, instead he tried to serve two masters and he failed.[10]

Question a Mormon

1. Did Joseph Smith take away from the Word of God by disregarding commandments he did not like?
2. Was *the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* founded by an intentional and habitual commandment breaker?
3. Did taking many wives lead Joseph Smith's heart astray?
4. If your next door neighbor followed Smith's example with exactness, would you sing *Praise to the Man* or report him to the authorities?

Joseph Smith called himself king. You must decide if he is worthy of that title or better suited for another. For sixty long years I struggled to reconcile these things. In the end, I could not and I ran from them all as quickly as I was able![11]

> Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
>
> –Bible*, 2 Timothy 2:22, KJV*

[10] *Bible*, Matthew 6:24 & Romans 8:5.
[11] *Bible*, Amos 5:14.

CHAPTER

FOUR

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 44:15-17, 24-26, 28 - *Will not listen*

Jeremiah 44:15-17, 24-26, 28; WEB

[16]"As for the word that you have spoken to us in Yahweh's name, we will not listen to you. [17]But we will certainly perform every word that has gone out of our mouth, to burn incense to the queen of the sky and to pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of food, and were well, and saw no evil. [24]Moreover Jeremiah said to all the people, including all the women, "Hear Yahweh's word, all Judah who are in the land of Egypt! [25]Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, says, 'You and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and with your hands have fulfilled it, saying, "We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of the sky, and to pour out drink offerings to her." "'Establish then your vows, and perform your vows.' [26]"Therefore hear Yahweh's word, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: 'Behold, I have sworn by my great name,' says Yahweh, 'that my name will no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, "As the Lord Yahweh lives." [28]Those who escape the sword will return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah few in number. All the remnant of Judah, who have gone into the land of Egypt to live there, will know whose word will stand, mine or theirs.

I am often amazed at God's timing. A part of me wants to say the perfect timing of things are only happy accidents. And yet, I have seen too much to ever believe that way again. The events of this morning are a case in point.

I had just began reading Jeremiah 44 when I heard an unexpected voice. Looking around, I realized it was coming from my pocket. I dug in my pocket, said hello and realized I had unintentionally butt-dialed a Mormon woman.

A conversation ensued in which she insinuated that I don't respect her feelings or experiences. It seems that I have hurt her feelings from time to time by not treating her feelings and experiences as valid evidences of the truth. She was absolutely correct.

I explained her feelings and experiences are absolutely irrelevant. Before she could voice her offense and objections, I contained, mine are equally unimportant and totally useless. This seemed to disarm her, making a way for us to have a productive exchange of ideas.

I explained, it makes no difference what we believe. The only thing that matters is what God reeled through His holy preserved word. When our feeling and experiences fail to line up, God is right an we are damned. We spoke about several gospel topics and ended the call.

Returning to Jeremiah, I realized that my conversation with this woman was a replay of one Jeremiah had 1,600 years earlier.

4.1 Do Not Seek Safety in Egypt or Any Ungodly Power

Jeremiah was speaking with rebellious Jews who sought safety in Egypt after being warned to stay in Judah.

Likewise, the Mormon people were warned about seeking safety in gods which they had not known.[1] In his lifetime, Joseph Smith taught many contradictory definitions of God. In my lifetime, Mormons believed their god was once a man as we are now. Recently, that god has been replaced with another.

The Mormons were warned about going after other gospels.[2] The biblical gospel is available to all.[3]. Another gospel is taught in the *Book of Mormon*,[4]. It does not match the biblical gospel. A more recent gospel definition matches neither the biblical or *Book of Mormon* variants.

> In its fulness, the gospel includes all the doctrine, principles, laws, ordinances, and covenants necessary for us to be exalted in the celestial kingdom.
>
> –True to the Faith*, 2004, p 76 & https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/gospel*

4.2 Reject God and Follow the Words of Our Mouth

Rebellious Jews told Jeremiah, we will not listen to you. Instead, we will follow the words that come out of our mouths.

[1] *Bible*, Deuteronomy 13:2.
[2] *Bible*, Galatians 1:6-9.
[3] *Bible*, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.
[4] *Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 27:13-15.

When words come from the mouths of a Mormon prophet or apostle, lay members call it prophetic revelation and believe every word. The thirteenth prophet of the Mormon church said, "The living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works (canonized Mormon scriptures)."[5] Consequently, even the Holy Bible takes second seat to every prophet and apostle.

When words fall from the mouth of a lay Mormon, he or she call it personal revelation. It has been my sad experience that most Mormons allow their own feeling and experiences to trump the Bible and even their other scriptures.

4.3 Queen of Heaven

Six hundred years before Jesus, lost Jews worshiped the Queen of the Sky. Some translations call her the Queen of Heaven. The Mormon equivalent is Heavenly Mother. Mormons hold her in such reverence that the will not speak her name. They don't openly worship her but I remember singing hymns to honor her.[6]

4.4 Establish and Perform Your Vows

As I spoke with this woman, she insisted that the covenants and ordinances performed in the Mormon were also active in Jeremiah's day and continued to Jesus time. I remember being taught the same when I was a Mormon. But, no proof was offered. In this we see one more example of rejecting God and trusting what comes from Mormon mouths.

I won't take time here to address every temple ordinance and covenant. I will look a one and it will sufficiently establish my point. Marriage is a pinnacle ordinance in the Mormon temple. By it, eternal families are formed according to Mormon doctrine.

I won't attempt

[5]Ezra Taft Benson. *Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1980. URL: `https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson/fourteen-fundamentals-following-prophet/`.

[6]Church of Jesus Christt of Latter-day Saints. *HYMNS*, O My Father.

CHAPTER

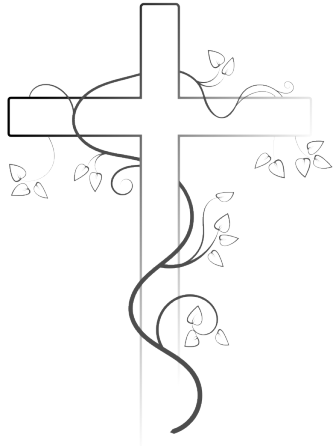
FIVE

DANIEL

Part II

NEW TESTAMENT

Messianic Prophesy Fulfilled



CHAPTER

SIX

MATTHEW

Matthew 5:44-45 - *Jesus Blesses the Just and Unjust*

Lance: Matthew 5:44-45: Index this chapter

Lance: Matthew 5:44-45: Hemmingway

Grace: Matthew 5:44-45: Paper proof

Matthew 5:44-45, KJV

[44]But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; [45]That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

I received a lengthy text from a longtime Mormon friend.

He apologized for not reaching out earlier and offered his frustration as the cause of his delay. Continuing, he said, "I started telling you about my relationship with Jesus and how He influences and blesses my life." He explained his offense at my statement, "God showers down rain and sunlight on the wicked as well as the righteous." He explained, "I got the feeling you were saying God's influence in my life was of no value because of my beliefs."

I see why my words may have been hurtful or offensive. My apologies, as that was not the message I intended to send. I care deeply for this man and, in fact, my love for him is far deeper than it was when I was Mormon and we saw eye to eye.

As a Christian called to share the gospel with the Mormon people, I struggle between two realities.

First, I am tasked to give every lost soul a reason for the hope in me. I am to deliver that answer with gentleness and respect.[1]

Secondly, Jesus is our best example of delivering the good news with gentleness and respect. Jesus delivered the truth as only he can, and even then, the hearers insisted that He must die. God is love, and even He offends the world.[2]

Therefore, I conclude, I must never be offensive while delivering the gospel that almost always offends. So, I am forced to examine myself continually. Is it I or the gospel that offends. When I am the offender, I am in the wrong. If the Word of God causes offense, the hearer is at fault. In this case, I fear my friend, the hearer who was offended by my accurate paraphrase of scripture.[3]

So, my dear friend, I never meant to accuse you of being evil, unworthy, or unjust. My point, then and now, is that God pours His blessings on all people. Therefore, receiving Godly blessings does not prove one to be acceptable, good, or justified.

Here is the key I would have you understand. While God promises many blessings for all people, good or evil, He never promised salvation and eternal life for those who are evil or unjust. Eternal life is reserved for the few who follow the path leading to life.[4] This blessing is the greatest and only lasting blessing of our God. That is the blessing we must seek. A conversation on that topic is one we must have, and so we shall.[5]

Lance: Matthew 5:44-45: Continue my answer to this friend in margin notes for Matthew 5:48 & Gal 5:1-4

Lance: Matthew 5:44-45: Index this chapter

[1] *Bible*, 1 Peter 3:15.
[2] *Bible*, John 15:18.
[3] *Bible*, Matthew 5:44-45.
[4] *Bible*, Matthew 7:14.
[5] *Bible*, Matthew 5:48 & Galatians 5:1-4.

Matthew 5:48 - *Be Ye Perfect*

Matthew 5:48, KJV

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

6.0.1 Dealing with Sin

I recall an exchange that happened on the front porch of a Mormon neighbor. He was one of the High Priests[6] who excommunicated me nearly a decade earlier. He was a bit frosty in his demeanor, so I assumed our past incursions caused him to be on edge. I, on the other hand, rested comfortably in the Lord. God made me new,[7] so nothing said could separate me from His love.[8]

We spoke about Jesus' commandment that compels us all, "Be ye therefore perfect". I explained, I am at peace with God because I live blamelessly before Him. He exploded, "Oh, so now you think you're perfect!" No, I replied, I am not perfect but blameless and because of my blameless state, I have received the righteousness of God.[9] And, having the righteousness of God, I am perfectly justified and have peace with Him!

I offered to open the Word of God and show him the evidence for my claim. He refused my offer and broke off the discussion. It's been more than a year since I stood on his porch. We have not spoken since. I think of him often, and my heart whispers an intercessory prayer.

On another occasion, I stood in a school parking lot with an angry Mormon bishop. When I suggested that I satisfy the commandment to be perfect, his reaction was an immediate accusation of arrogant pride.

Since my conversations with these Mormon leaders, I have had the same discussion with many Mormons. Almost every exchange has concluded in the same sad way. Most Mormons refuse to believe Jesus intended them to keep this specific command.

[6] See Chapter: *Hebrews 5:1 & Hebrews 7:27-28*
[7] *Bible*, 2 Corinthians 5:17.
[8] *Bible*, Romans 8:38-39.
[9] *Bible*, Romans 3:22.

Question a Mormon

Among the Mormon people, why are Mormon leaders most likely to reject Jesus' commandment?

6.0.2 Achieving Mormon Perfection

Reason leads me to an inescapable conclusion. If Jesus commanded us to be perfect, He would provide a way for sinful men like me to satisfy His decree.

The Book of Mormon promises more than a simple way to satisfy Jesus' command. It insists men, women, boys, and girls can perfectly obey without flaw or failure.

> I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.
>
> –Book of Mormon, *1 Nephi 3:7*

Small Mormon children love to sing *Nephi's Courage*, "I will go; I will do the thing the Lord commands. I know the Lord provides a way; he wants me to obey."

Question a Mormon

Why do Mormon children sing this song while their leaders angrily reject Jesus' command?

I believe doubt in the LDS people is the fruit of their leaders. Leaders in my Mormon past taught that reaching perfection was not required until the afterlife. They insisted I would have time and opportunity to repent of my sins and keep Jesus' commandment after my death. Mormonism taught me that perfection was not required or even possible in this lifetime.

In the last Mormon General Conference, the newest apostle said, "... you don't have to be perfect to be in this Church. You just have to do your best, and Christ will make up the difference."[10]

In an earlier conference, another apostle delivered a well-known talk titled, "*Be Ye Therefore Perfect – Eventually*".[11]

Question a Mormon

1. Can you think of a time when Jesus reversed His commandment to be perfect?
2. Can you point to a time when Jesus said His commandment will only become binding until the afterlife?
3. Isaiah said his best efforts are, to the Lord, as filthy rags. Likewise, Paul likened his best to dung. Why then to Mormon apostles suggest your best will be enough?

6.0.3 Live Blamelessly Before God

The way is before our eyes if we will only see. To my sorrow, there are many who will not see nor understand.[12] I hope you are different. I pray you will continue with me so perhaps we might live together blamelessly as Jesus intended.

Before discussing biblical righteousness, I ask you, "What kind of man was Abraham? Was he righteous or was he sinful?" Before you answer, remember what Paul and Isaiah said about their righteousness and best efforts.

Abraham was, at times, weak and prone to sin. He trusted in his own strength instead of resting fully in God. Are we any different? Do we say, God

[10] Clark G. Gilbert. *Come Home*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2026. URL: https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2026/04/15gilbert.

[11] Jeffrey R. Holland. *Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2017. URL: www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2017/10/be-ye-therefore-perfect-eventually.

[12] *Bible*, Matthew 13:13.

can do anything and then lean on our own understanding?[13] I believe Abraham was more like us than we might imagine.

Abraham, you, and I are equally fit for hell. James taught, if we keep the whole law and stumble on a single insignificant point, we are guilty of violating the whole.[14] Paul adds his witness to James' bold words. He wrote to those who would save themselves by keeping the law. He warned, if you begin down that path, you must abide by every point written in the law or be cursed.[15] Mormon doctrine explicitly says salvation comes though law keeping.[16]

6.1 Achieving Biblical Perfection

Scripture clearly teaches that Abraham believed. Because he believed, God accepted that belief and credited it to him as righteousness.

> For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."
>
> –Bible*, Romans 4:3, BSB*

Question a Mormon

1. Do you believe God counted Abraham righteous because he believed?
2. What type of righteousness did God credit to Abraham? Was it the righteousness of a faithful disciple, a prophet, or something else?

Context provides the biblical answer to the above question.

> Even the **righteousness of God** which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:. . .
>
> –Bible*, Romans 3:22a, KJV, emphasis added*

[13] *Bible*, Genesis:18:14 & Proverbs 3:5.
[14] *Bible*, James 2:10.
[15] *Bible*, Galatians 5:3.
[16] Joseph Smith. *Articles of Faith*, 3rd.

I don't want you to miss this. The magnitude of righteousness imputed to those who believe is, in fact, **the righteousness of God!**

This promise extends beyond Romans. It is a glorious promise that fills the Word of God from cover to cover.

> For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the **righteousness of God in Him.**
>
> –Bible*, 2 Corinthians 5:21*

Abraham faced many difficult struggles in his life. He doubted, and sometimes he failed. Through it all, he repented faithfully and turned back to God. Even when everything seemed impossible, Abraham continued to believe.Now here is the miraculous wonder of God's promise. Even as we live imperfectly, sinfully at times, we will receive the perfect righteousness of God if we but believe.[17]

Question a Mormon

1. Do you believe people in Christ will receive the righteousness of God?
2. Do you believe God will justify the ungodly who believe, even as they struggle with doubt and sin?

What about us? Do we have the same hope when everything seems hopeless? Paul assured us that because of belief, Jesus imputed His righteousness to Abraham, as He will for us.[18]

Question a Mormon

Is this good news, or do you prefer to save yourself through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Mormon gospel?

[17] *Bible*, Romans 4:5.
[18] *Bible*, Romans 4:22-25.

And now, let us bring it all home.

> Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
>
> –Bible, *Romans 5:1, KJV*

I boldly declare, having been justified by faith, I have total peace with God through my Lord Jesus Christ.

> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because all things that I heard from My Father, I have made known to you.
>
> –Bible, *John 15:15, BSB*

6.1.1 Joseph Smith Revisions

Let us return again to Romans 4:5. This time, however, I reference the *Joseph Smith Translation*, also called the *Inspired Version*.

In reliable Bible translations, this passage speaks of God, who justifies ungodly sinners simply because they believe in Him. Instead of reading, "Him that justifieth the ungodly" Smith wrote, "him who justifieth **not** the ungodly (emphasis added)."

Having exposed this biblical rewrite, it's time for a few concluding questions.

Question a Mormon

1. If God will not justify the ungodly, how can He count Abraham righteous?
2. If Abraham cannot be justified, what hope is there for you?
3. Can you point to a promise in Romans 4 that remains valid if God will not justify ungodly creatures like me and you?
4. How can we have peace with God if Smith is right and the promises of Romans 4 are void?
5. Did Holland and Gilbert follow the example of Joseph Smith and rewrite the sacred Word of God?

6.1.2 Conclusion

Mormon leaders have dared to call me sinful and pride-filled for believing God's promise of imputed righteousness. They demean and defame my trust in the commandments of God. I conclude they are false teachers and blind guides.[19] When I consider that my Holy, Holy God would impute a *wretch like me* with His perfect righteousness, I stand in awe. It is not pride, but indescribable humility that causes me to fall on my face before Him. It is humility that leads me to speak boldly of the perfect Agape Love of my Lord and my God!

Matthew 10:16-20 - *Persecution for Jesus' sake*

Matthew 10:16-20, KJV

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore
wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 17 But beware of men: for they
will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their
synagogues; 18 and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my
sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they
deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be
given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that
speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

A woman sent a text today. She was upset because she believes I am clinging to incidents of persecution by the Mormon church. She seems to think I am doing this for unhealthy reasons. The tone of her note indicated that seeing, she cannot see. I don't believe this is a matter of her being unable to see. Instead, I believe she is unwilling to see. I suspect she suffers self-imposed blindness.[20]

My Mormon excommunication hearing was a blatant abuse of power. In it, the Stake President dialed 911 and filed a false police report. I don't dwell on these things in the way this woman suggested. I see them through a biblical lens. When Joseph's brothers sold him into Egypt, they meant it for evil, but

[19] *Bible*, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 Timothy 6:3-5 & Matthew 15:14.
[20] *Bible*, Matthew 13:14-38.

God used it for good.[21]

The Mormon Church delivered me over to church councils, criminal courts, ten police officers who came to arrest or drive me away, and more. In every case, the Mormon Church meant it for evil, but God used it for good and for His glory.

The featured passage says religious zealots will bring Jesus' disciples before criminal courts, religious councils, civil authorities, and more. During my excommunication hearing, I testified about Jesus for His sake. In criminal court, before 10 individual police officers and Mormon security guards, I did the same for Jesus' sake.

For Jesus' sake is the key to understanding all this. Matthew 10 states that these things will happen for Jesus' sake. So, when I mention these things, it is not because I hold a grudge or want self-centered justice. If I mention these, it is in celebration, humility, and gratitude.

Peter and John stood before the council, being questioned and beaten. But then . . .

> And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.
>
> –Bible, *Acts 5:41, KJV*

I speak of these things for the same reason the Bible records the stories of Joseph, Peter, and John. I do all this for the glory of God!

Matthew 10:28 - *Fear him who is able to destroy you in hell*

Lance: Matthew 10:28: Index this chapter

Lance: Matthew 10:28: Hemmingway

Matthew 10:28, KJV

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

[21] *Bible*, Genesis 50:20.

6.1.3 An Unexpected Call

I received a surprising call from a longtime friend. Our friendship began over twenty years earlier with trips to the Mormon temple with our sweet wives.

I noticed a tragic shift in his attitude these past years. After Jesus rescued me and made me a new new creature,[22] my friend changed. We encountered each other occasionally during our comings and goings. In those chance meetings, my message remained unchanged. I assured him I finally had an unshakable certainty of my salvation. I asked, "can we get together, open those books you hold to be scripture and see what they say about the salvation of him, his wife, and their children?"

The Mormon people have an unchanging answer to this critically important question. Every answer is a variation of one theme, later but not now. They promise, when my work schedule is more accommodating, when I finish school, when harvest is over. Apparently, they never satisfy the stated conditions, so the desired discussion never happens. Days turn to weeks, weeks to months, months to years, and years to a lifetime. In the end, a lifetime of self-imposed blindness becomes an eternity in hell. And my heart breaks for them!

When my phone rang, I looked at the caller ID, and my heart skipped a beat. Was it possible that my friend was finally ready to talk of eternal things? No, the possibility of heaven or hell was not on his radar. He was calling about an upcoming school levy. In his mind, the taxman's ability to reach into his wallet was the greater priority. He will talk to me about this pressing matter, but not God's salvation for men. Taxes are not eternal, and yet taxation was the matter that pressed most heavily on his mind.

The Word of God reminds us not to fear the man who can kill, injure, or steal. God has given this wise counsel since the world began.[23] And yet, taxes move this man to action. His words displayed his biblical inconsistency and blindness.

6.1.4 A Shift to Eternal Things

In sincerity, I asked, why are you willing to talk to me about taxes and unwilling to explore eternal things? I began asking biblical questions that had no answer in his Mormon reality. The more I asked, the louder he got. You would expect

[22] *Bible*, 2 Corinthians 5:17.
[23] *Bible*, Isaiah 51:12-13 & Luke 12:4.

more control from a priesthood holder in *the only true church on the face of the earth*. Sadly, that obvious expectation has never materialized.

This chapter is part one of a multi-part answer to each question that left my friend without a response. The answer will continue as I write a biblical address for each question and his every objection.

Matthew 28:19 - *Go and Make Disciples*

Lance: Matthew 28:19: Index this chapter

Lance: Matthew 28:19: write this chapter for sweet M

Lance: Matthew 28:19: Hemmingway

Grace: Matthew 28:19: Paper proof

Draft Notice

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Lance: Matthew 28:19: Clear from Draft

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Matthew 28:19a

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. . .

In my immediate and extended family, there is no shortage of beautiful and amazing young people. Oh, I do love my grandchildren, nephews, and nieces.

When I left Mormonism in 2016, Grace and I wrote a letter and distributed it to the parents of these incredible young people. In that letter I made a commitment that I have been faithful in keeping. Keeping my promise has been incredibly difficult because I feel such an urgency, such a love for each one.

My promise was that I would not approach and of they children while they were under the age of eighteen. Was I write in making this commandment? Honestly, I am not sure. I do believe it is the parents right to lead and teach their children as they think best. On the flip side, Jesus mentioned no age limit when He directed His disciples to make disciple of every nation. Right or wrong, I have kept my word.

In my family there is a beautiful, inside and out, young lady. I will refer to her as Abby, to make her as personal and real to you as she is to me, and to protect her identity. Abby is to me, precious in so many ways. In this body of youth, I hold out none as favorites, but each is unique in their own special way. In the case of Abby, she is an absolute standout. She is bright and inquisitive but above all, her heart is right. There is a gentle peace in her soul that drew me near and made he so easy to love. And love her is did and love her I do.

Abby was about fourteen years old when her parents sat me down to air their grievances. They had remained true to their Mormon roots. As such, They had been offended over many things. Clearly, some of these offenses were caused by foolish callousness. I regret my short comings more than any can possibly know. Other times, I believe they were offended because of their Mormonism and the ingrained tendency to see the worst in member of the Great and Abominable church.[24]

According to them, precious Abby voiced difficult questions and criticisms about me. She asked, why is he like that? She wished I could be like two of her uncles who left Mormonism for a live of agnostic separation from Jesus. She wondered why I was unable to be like her Christian friends who never challenged her faith and who she, in turn, never challenged. Hearing these things, my heart broke into tiny jagged pieces. I ached to respond, but Abby's parents moved away and I was never given an opportunity.

I had faithfully kept my word and isolated Abby from every discussion or comparison between Mormonism and the faith in Jesus that saved me. So many times I wanted to share what I loved most with Abby, the girl I love so much.

Reflecting on Abby's questions, I realized she could only form her objections if others were sharing my faults with he while I kept my word to her parents. I felt robbed! My beautiful relationship with this cherished girl had been taken by those who spoke to her while holding me to a promise of total silence.

Dear sweet Abby, as I write this you are fast approaching you eighteenth

[24] *Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 13 & 14.

birthday. When that landmark day finally comes, this chapter will answer the questions you asked and held in you heart so many years ago.

You are mature beyond your years and I am so proud of you. I am so sorry there has been a palpable tension between us. That was never you fault. Perhaps the fault partially rests with those led you have such difficult and unanswerable questions. One thing is perfectly clear, I am to blame. I am to blame because made and kept a foolish promise. In making the promise, I thought I was right. I worry now that I set myself against Jesus who called us to make disciples of every people.[25]

The chains of that promise are falling off, even now. I don't want to force anything on you. But Abby, I ache to share my most treasured possession with you.I ache because you are precious to me and and you are precious to God. I am praying you will allow this to happen. At least, please allow me to answer the questions you asked all those years ago.

6.1.5 Why is he like that?

One of my favorite passages declares that anyone united with Christ becomes a new creation, where the old life has passed away and all things are become new.[26] Dear sweet Abby, in the moment I was born again, the old me died and who I am rose in Christ as a new life. I can still remember old Lance. I know he existed but to me, he is an absolute stranger. I know this must sound strange to you but some things can never be comprehended until it is experienced. With everything in me, I want you to have this experience.

Speaking of being born again, the Pharisee Nicodemus, went to Jesus by night. He went at night because he was hiding his deeds from prideful friends.[27] Born again was a strange thing for Jesus to say. It seemed strange to Nicodemus. But think about it Abby. If you could remember your first birth, what failed to become new? In an instant you passed from a dark, wet, warm, and muffled world. You leapt from a that place into a world where all you senses were flooded with new, new, new! The things you heard... new! The things you saw ... new! Abby, everything you felt, tasted, felt, and experienced was explosively and dramatically transformed into something you could never imagine. If we could remember that moment of total change and absolute newness, it would

[25] *Bible*, Matthew 28:19.
[26] *Bible*, 2 Corinthians 5:17.
[27] *Bible*, John 3:1-21.

amaze us even now.

I couldn't comprehend any of this until it happened a second time.

The people often wondered, why is Jesus like that. It wasn't always that he was so offensive. He was just different and the people could never reconcile the simple question, why is He like that. And so, to end their questioning discomfort, they cried, crucify him![28]

6.1.6 Resources

"Becometh As a Child" By Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Church members will live in this wheat-and-tares situation until the Millennium. Some real tares even masquerade as wheat, including the few eager individuals who lecture the rest of us about Church doctrines in which they no longer believe. They criticize the use of Church resources to which they no longer contribute. They condescendingly seek to counsel the Brethren whom they no longer sustain. Confrontive, except of themselves, of course, they leave the Church, but they cannot leave the Church alone (see Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 17; or Ensign, Nov. 1980, 14). Like the throng on the ramparts of the "great and spacious building," they are intensely and busily preoccupied, pointing fingers of scorn at the steadfast iron-rodders (see 1 Ne. 8:26–28, 33). Considering their ceaseless preoccupation, one wonders, Is there no diversionary activity available to them, especially in such a large building—like a bowling alley? Perhaps in their mockings and beneath the stir are repressed doubts of their doubts. In any case, given the perils of popularity, Brigham Young advised that this "people must be kept where the finger of scorn can be pointed at them" (Discourses of Brigham Young, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 434).

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ge conference/1996/04/becometh-as-a-child?lang=eng

I do all this because Romans 10:1 make Paul and me brothers ... brothers in Christ.

Failure to tell you is to willingly participate in your eternal and unending murder. No, I cannot be part of the evil that tears you from Jesus wh is the giver of life.[29] John 5:13Bible

[28] *Bible*, Matthew 27:22-23, Mark 15:13, Luke 23:21 & John 19:6-15.
[29] **1**.

CHAPTER

SEVEN

MARK

Mark 4:3-8 - *A Sower Went Out to Sow*

Lance: Mark 4:3-8: Index this chapter

Lance: Mark 4:3-8: Hemmingway

Grace: Mark 4:3-8: Paper proof

Draft Notice

This page is not yet perfected. Please check back later to see the finalized commentary. I appreciate your patience as I perfect and move this section toward final publication.

Lance: Mark 4:3-8: Clear from Draft

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Mark 4:3-8, KJV

3Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

7.0.1 Resources

Server: Hailey

Institute student, Virginia

Young father: Cody

CHAPTER

EIGHT

ACTS

Acts 1:8 - *Witnesses of Christ*

Lance: Acts 1:8: Index this chapter

Acts 1:8, BSB

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

8.0.1 A Burden for the Lost

Come along with me; I want to show you something. Join me on a busy interstate overpass. If you look down, you notice cars, trucks, motorcycles, and tractor-trailer rigs rushing past. Some are coming and others are going. There are so many, so, so many! Do you see them, and what does all this mean?

Count them, if you are able, one, two, three, thirty-three. Keep counting and notice how quickly the numbers climb into the hundreds, thousands, and beyond.

Wait, are you counting the vehicles only? That is not what I meant at all. Count the people as they pass. Account for every person, every face, every

image bearer of God as they rush through their daily lives. Is it even possible to number each individual, or are there so many that some escape your notice? Unlike you and me, God has numbered each one; He knows their faces, and He desires each one should be saved.[1] What would change, I wonder, if we begin to see then all as Jesus does?

8.0.2 Power in the Spirit

The Bible speaks of the moment a person becomes a Christian, being filled with the Holy Spirit. In that instant, all we ever were, dies, and we become new creatures in Christ.[2] Many claim this miracle transformed and saved them. But I can't help but wonder. Please allow me to explain.

I was sixty years old when I finally hit the bottom of the proverbial barrel. From the day we married until God saved us, Grace and I wandered in the wilderness for exactly forty years. We were faithfully devoted Mormons, but something was missing. Something felt critically wrong.

In all that time, no Christian shared the truth with us or even tried. Oh, they knew us and, in some cases, loved us as friends and family. It is not my place to judge those who never spoke up. But I am right to wonder why! Perhaps they didn't know how to begin. Or maybe some wrongly believed the Holy Spirit filled them when it did not.

8.0.3 Witness to Someone Today

I often consider people's silence considering the passage that says we will be witnesses when the spirit comes upon us. The passage doesn't say we may or might become witnesses. It says we will!

My part of the country is a largely unreached mission field. The same is true for you, regardless of where you live.

> Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.
>
> *–John 4:35, KJV*

[1] *Bible*, 1 Timothy 2:4.
[2] *Bible*, 2 Corinthians 5:17.

As cars rush beneath your feet, I hope you recognize that many are desperate image bearers who need to hear from you. Now please carry this example into your world. Every day, in all you do, start counting the people around you. Count them, see them, and please love them enough to say something.[3] And if you don't know what to say, try this...

Question a
Mormon

"Excuse me, may I ask a question? Do you have a saving relationship with God?"

This simple question seems to work every time. And, OH MAN, it opens doors to meaningful discussions.

Acts 17:28-29 - *Genos of God*

Lance: Acts 17:28-29: Index this chapter

Acts 17:28-29, KJV

[28]For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. [29]Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

8.0.4 God's Offspring

A Mormon man said, "Acts 17 is great. Therein we see that we are all God's offspring." I have heard this claim on many occasions. As a Mormon, I likely said the same because I held to the Mormon notion of our premortal existence.

[3] *Bible*, Matthew 28:19.

After leaving Mormonism, I learned the Bible is not the King James Version or any other translation. All translations are, at best, imperfect representations of what the biblical writers wrote and taught.

The Bible is literally preserved in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. Writers of the original texts penned these scrolls and manuscripts in their native languages. In their chosen languages, they penned the word of God. Bible translations are men's attempts to render the ancient languages into English. Most are valuable. None are perfect. We must go to the source to gain the best understanding.

Though I cannot read, write, or speak these languages, I have surrounded myself with the tools necessary to examine every biblical word along with the applicable translation or translations. These resources have caused the Bible to come alive before my eyes.

In relation to the Mormon man's claim, I can make a strong case for Mormons believing the Bible to be the word of God as far as they translate it incorrectly.

8.0.5 Translation

In Strong's Concordance, we find an examination of *offspring* as found in Acts 17:28-29, KJV. The Greek word Luke penned is *genos*. Translators can use this word to indicate that a person is the literal offspring of another. Hence, the Mormons interpret it to mean that they are the literal offspring of their Heavenly Father and one of his polygamous wives.

Biblical writers often use "*genos*" to indicate a place, time, condition, or population group where a person or thing originates. Therefore, it can rightly be said that I am *genos* of Larry and Diane; Utah; the 70's; Weber High; the Baby Boomers; Pleasant View; Mormonism; Utah Pioneer stock; Yankees little league; and the Ogden City Jail.

8.0.6 Context

When an ancient word, in this case *genos*, has more than one possible translation, we must dig deeper. To establish how Luke used *genos* and his intended meaning, hermeneutics demands that we examine the context. Continuing his letter to Theophilus, Luke wrote,

> And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.
> –Bible, *Acts 18:24, KJV*

In this case, translators rendered *genos* as *born at*. In this passage, Luke's usage of *genos* is not in question. Can any rightly assert that Apollos was the literal offspring of Alexandria, an ancent metropolis on lower Egypt? Luke used *genos* to describe the region and people group from which Apollos hailed. This passage clearly illustrates how Luke used *genos* in the book of Acts.

In a more distant passage, we see *genos* used again. This time, Jesus is the author.

> I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.
> –*Revelation 22:16, KJV*

Jesus illustrated, He fulfilled ancient prophecy that the Messiah would come as a descendant of David. In fact, He revealed Himself as the root of David. Literally, He is the *genos* from which David came. He is God who is the source of all things, including David.

Jesus also described Himself as the *genos*, a descendant of David. None would claim that David is the literal father of Jesus. Jesus used *genos* only to place Himself in a line from which Messiah must prophetically come.

8.0.7 Summary

In this chapter, we have looked at every New Testament passage that contains *genos*. If the first stood in isolation, the Mormon people could make a good argument that we are the literal offspring of God, created by Him through sexual relations.

The second usage of that word, just a few short sentences later, shows that Luke did not use *genos* to describe a parent/child relationship. In the third usage of *genos*, Jesus did not use it in a way that supports the Mormon interpretation.

Question a
Mormon

If you strip away the bias created by a lifetime of Mormon training, would this hermeneutic of *genos* be a convincing argument?

CHAPTER

NINE

1 CORINTHIANS

1 Corinthians 1:12 - *I am of Paul and I am of Apollos*

Lance: 1 Corinthians 1:12: Index this chapter

Lance: 1 Corinthians 1:12: Hemmingway

Grace: 1 Corinthians 1:12: Paper proof

Draft Notice

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Lance: 1 Corinthians 1:12: Clear from Draft

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1 Corinthians 1:12, KJV

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

9.0.1 I Am of My Flesh

On a beautiful Sunday morning, I found myself preaching at a small church in Pocatello, Idaho. Part way through the sermon, a woman enter the sanctuary and took a seat.

When services were over, she approached and introduced herself as the pastor at the local *RAINBOW* church. She was kind, but critical, insisting that I should preach from the read words of the Bible only. She rejected Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. Likewise, John, Paul, and Jude were written of as less than desirable.

In short, she rejected 2 Timothy 3:16 and every passage of scripture except the words that were attributed to Jesus alone. By this, she was able to preach a narrowed version of Christianity that endorsed all manor of sexual immorality!

9.0.2 I Am of Luther and Calvin

Grace and I visited a church that taught many things I could not reconcile with the Bible. When I questioned the pastor about my concerns, he responded, we follow the teachings of 16th century reformers.

In short, when the teaching of Calvin, Luther, and/or Augustus of Hippo collide with the Bible, this pastor lifted the teaching of men above the preserved Word of God!

9.0.3 I Am of Joseph Smith

A Mormon man asked, "What denomination are you apart of?" I responded, "No denomination.Call me disciple." Having been Mormon for sixty years, I knew my answer would be beyond his comprehension so I waited. Sure enough, he responded, "What theology do you hold to or lean towards? Protestant? Reformed? Catholic?" It is a sad reality that most Mormons cannot conceive of a man or woman who has a saving relationship with Jesus outside of some organized church or denomination. He continued to struggle with the concept and I came to understand he could not comprehend what is so clear to me and many others.

In short, this man wants Jesus if only He will first become a Mormon!

9.0.4 I Am of Jesus Christ

"I think Christians love to get wadded up in minutia. Was Jesus Calvinist, Arminan, or Orthodox? Did He wear Reebok or Adidas?

Prophesy points to Jesus as my passover lamb. It points to Him fulfilling the law I could never keep. It points to salvation through Him for all who believe.

The gospel is simple, beautiful, and easily comprehend. So, why clutter it with the varied interpretations of men who look past the obvious to argue every point? Why embrace expanded theologies that spring from denominationalism?

For this reason, I reject every ***ist*** and ***ism***. Each is a manmade creation with a unique set of peculiar traditions[1]. These traditions may bot be evil, but many are not biblical. Therefore, I am not a church, organization, or denomination. I am a disciple!

I could be wrong, but I don't think so."

9.0.5 Conclusion

If Paul were alive today, I believe he would write, "*Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of the Flesh; and I of Calvin; and I of Smith; and I of Christ.*" I want, more than all other desires, to be numbered with Jesus Christ.

[1] *Bible*, Mark 7:7-9.

CHAPTER

TEN

GALATIANS

Galatians 5:2-4 - *Law or Grace, choose one*

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Lance: Galatians 5:2-4: Clear from Draft

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Galatians 5:2-3, KJV

[2]Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. [3]For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. [4]Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

The first century Galatians and modern Mormons worship according to the same gospel. At least, that is my claim. In this section, I will present evidence that my claim is accurate.

10.0.1 Understanding Circumcision

In the 1st century, circumcision was not performed for the reasons that are common today. Modern circumcision is for hygiene or tradition. To a lessor degree, some observe this practice for religious purposes.

Jewish faithful anciently circumcised to honor a covenant with God. The practice was outward evidence of a life committed to God and the keeping of His law. Thus, this passage can only be properly understood in the Jewish context.

In the proper context, Paul's reference to circumcision must incorporate every point of the whole law.

10.0.2 The Gospel of the Galatians

Paul had taught the Galatians that the law was fulfilled in Christ.[1] He admonished them to believe in Jesus and avoid things that cause them to stumble.[2]

Paul warned that receiving circumcision, and all it entailed, would lead to the bondage of the law.[3]

He encouraged them to remember the freedom they once enjoyed in Christ. As he warned the Romans,[4] he warned the Galatians that none will be justified by the law.[5] It is not that the law is weak. Rather, because of the weaknesses of men, God sent his son to fulfill and redeem.[6]

Despite the warnings, some sought justification through legalism and law keeping.

10.0.3 The Gospel of the Mormons

The Mormon gospel is best summed up in two quotes from primary LDS sources.

> We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
>
> –Articles of Faith*, Article 3*

[1] *Bible*, Acts 21:21.
[2] *Bible*, Romans 14:2-3 & 13.
[3] *Bible*, Galatians 5:1.
[4] *Bible*, Romans 3:20.
[5] *Bible*, Galatians 2:16.
[6] *Bible*, Romans 8:3.

> In its fulness, the gospel includes all the doctrines, principles, laws, ordinances, and covenants necessary for us to be exalted in the celestial kingdom.
>
> –True to the Faith*, p 76 & Gospel Topics Essay, Gospel, www.churchofjesuschrist.org*

Who can deny that the Mormon gospel demands law keeping for justification. Who can deny that exaltation in the highest Mormon heaven demands works? Our passage is clear. If you seek justification by keeping the law, you become a debtor to the whole of it. James, the brother of Jesus, taught that same principle. He said, if you keep the whole law and stumble with one minor infraction, you are guilty of violating the entire law.[7] Many claim they live good and moral lives. But who among us dares to insist they live every point perfectly?

Question a
Mormon

1. Can you deny that law keeping is a key part of the Mormon gospel?
2. Can you deny that some point of the law is a stumbling stone for you?
3. Seeking justification through keeping laws and ordinances of the LDS gospel, how can you deny that Christ has become of no effect for you?
4. If Christ is of no effect, how are you not fallen from grace?

[7] *Bible*, James 2:10.

CHAPTER

ELEVEN

EPHESIANS

Ephesians 2:19 - *No longer strangers, but sometimes orphans*

Lance: Ephesians 2:19: index chapter

Lance: Ephesians 2:19: Hemmingway

Ephesians 2:19, KJV

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

This article is very personal to me. As a general rule, I shy away from writing about poignant things. However, O am struggling. I write for all burdened people, as this struggle is not unique to me. I write because I am compelled to ask, what does it mean to be a disciple of the king?

11.0.1 A New Christian

As a newly rescued Christian, I was awestruck with the simplicity and beauty of the biblical gospel.[1] I couldn't imagine anything better. I saw no other way

[1] *Bible*, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

for a man to have a certain assurance of his right standing with God! I couldn't imagine a people with this gift being anything but fully united.

11.0.2 A New Ministry

God called me to ministry for the Mormon people. This was God's will, and for many reasons, I moved according to His word. Most of all, Romans 10:1 affected my every waking moment and haunted my dreams. If you replace the reference to Paul's people, the Israelites, with *the Mormons* it's as if God wrote this passage specifically for me.

11.0.3 Division

There are some, not all, but some who seek to make disciples. The sad truth is that these are not the disciples Jesus mentioned.[2]

It is not a hard thing to speak often and negatively about a person. It doesn't take long create a following whose opinions are not based on actual experience. Instead, they think they know the truth about a person, based solely on the murmurings of another.

I submit that this kind of thing cannot exist among a people who are really the body of Christ. And yet, in my christian walk, I have experienced this egregious behavior on several occasions. Five separate incidents in nine years of Christianity have robbed me and other or the oneness that should never exist in the body of Christ.

It is not a difficult thing to find something wrong in every person. It is not hard to point out the flaw and continue until everyone sees it first. While focusing on a person's flaw, it can be difficult to see there admirable qualities.

11.0.4 The Cost

Cultish

Since leaving Mormonism for Jesus, Mormon leaders have made many accusations, called the police for various reasons, and charged me with a crime. None of their actions stuck, but they lingered in the minds of Mormon people. And they tend to grow over time.

[2] *Bible*, Matthew 28:19.

Question a Mormon

When Christians act as described above, they are acting in the most Mormon way I can imagine. What does that suggest about the Mormon's and those who imitate them?

Separated by Offense

I worry when a person accuses another and supports that accusation by appealing to the disciples he made. By this, he places tension between the accused and those he claims as confederates. Even if this tension never escalates, it impedes true fellowship. The accused will stop attending church, not knowing if fellow church members are friends or accusers. Once ignited, a spark of doubt can be difficult to extinguish. It is sad that a match lit by one man can infect an entire church.

The Bible speaks of a millstone tied around the neck of one who offends Jesus' little ones.[3] Those who separate themselves because of an offense are commonly immature in their walk with Jesus. I would submit that these are among Jesus' *little ones*. Would you offend these?

Like a Feather Pillow

I have heard gossip and accusations described as a feather pillow, cut open and deposited on the accused's doorstep. Repairing the damage is like returning months or years later, collecting every piece of scattered down and restoring the pillow as it once was.

When you shake feathers over another, how will you restore them again. Each time someone hears, believes, or repeats what first fell from your mouth, will you be culpable again?

The Lake of Fire

This, I believe, is the greatest and saddest cost of all.

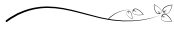
[3] *Bible*, Matthew 18:6.

The longer I live as a Christian, the more I want to see people as Jesus sees them. I try to see everyone, even my accusers, as gems more precious than diamonds. This is no simple task, but it is the goal.

Scripture assures us we will be judged as we judge others and forgiven as we forgive. If you pass from this world, leaving bits of down floating on the air, how will you be saved? Will your accusations and condemnations reverberate from canyon walls after you are gone? If so, what does that mean for you? I don't know the answers to these questions; I only know they are important!

11.0.5 Be a True Disciple

What then does it mean to be a disciple of Christ? When discipleship is true, I suspect we will see the fruit of it in the church. In God's church, as it should exist, there will be no more strangers and foreigners. Let it be so among us, I pray.



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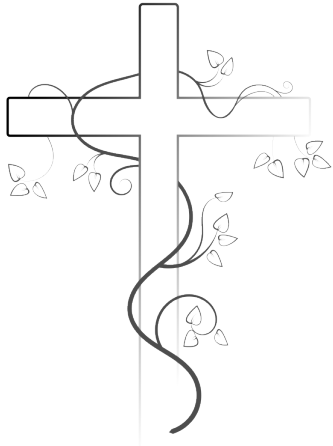

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