

## BOISE SCRIPTURES PROJECT PROGRESS UPDATE

The scripture committee would like to give all of you an update on the progress of the scriptures project, along with some new details about each volume. A PDF version of all the works to date can be downloaded from [scriptures.info](http://scriptures.info). Please note that until all of the work is finished, references to the Bible will be printed in red. Once the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible has been completed, all references will be double-checked and then the volumes will be made available in print and ebook formats.

*The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible*, or JST, is still a few months from completion. Our JST has been built from scratch starting with an original King James Version of the Bible. We are now in the process of updating the archaic language. The process has taken several months. We have utilized res Bible commentaries, several modern-day editions of the Bible, and have been blessed by the efforts of many volunteers who have worked to ensure that words are modernized correctly. We still have to replace some antiquated words and correct the grammar which is sometimes disturbed by the replacements. We're working on the formatting of chapters, paragraphs, numbering, and punctuation. We think this will take about three more months.

We hope to have something ready to print through Amazon by Christmas, followed by an online Research Version containing footnotes, cross-outs, spelling errors and other items that have been scrubbed to make the final version more readable. Then a finalized printed set with onion-skin cotton paper and leather binding will be produced.

*The Book of Mormon* and *Teachings and Commandments* have both been completed. They are not yet available on Amazon because scripture references that to the Bible have not yet been finalized, but this will be completed shortly.

## WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THESE SCRIPTURES?

The first volume, titled *The Old Covenants*, covers what is otherwise known as the Old Testament. This volume incorporates all the corrections made by Joseph Smith; it reflects hundreds of strike-throughs that he made that have never been included in any JST to date. In addition, over 1100 archaic terms have been replaced. However, nearly 300 archaic terms were "beyond repair." They were beyond our ability to replace cleanly and so we have left them alone — in compliance with the Lord's directive to ...***update language to select a current vocabulary, but take care not to change meaning — and if you cannot resolve the meaning, either petition me again or retain the former words.*** PDFs of those changes can be found on [scriptures.info](http://scriptures.info).

Some have questioned the need to modernize the language in the new scriptures. Let me say first that it is certainly true that something is lost by eliminating the archaic form. There is, for example, an ability with the thee/thou style to differentiate personal pronouns; that is lost in modern English with the catchall "you." Quite often sentences will have to be reordered to

accommodate the new language, and as a result, some verses that were familiar will become unfamiliar. Most of us grew up with the King James language, are comfortable with it, and have grown to love the majesty and dignity of the words.

But here is the problem. The language should not be majestic, not in the sense that it separates us from and puts distance between us and God. Although it is called the “familiar form,” in modern usage it has become the exact opposite. In our prayers we talk to God with the reserve and formality used to address the Supreme Court or the Wizard of Oz. At times the King James language seems to put our Heavenly Father on a distant, unreachable plane, and obscures the idea that God’s design is intimate. He wants us to approach him, and language that impedes that approach is not helpful.

For all its beauty, the King James language is not spoken or easily understood by most modern readers. Perhaps those of us who have heard it and read it all our lives in the LDS church or other churches are exceptions, but our duty going forward is to think more broadly. Who will these scriptures go to? Will those readers have to struggle unnecessarily with recondite, outdated, arcane language as they study the scriptures?

As those working on the new scriptures debated what to do, this question was asked of Denver, “Do you have a sense of how the Lord would respond to updated language?” Denver’s answer was that it was clear that modernizing the language would please the Lord. Denver also taught us that the Lord taught him that Joseph used the King James style in the Book of Mormon at the Lord’s behest, in order that Christians of the day would at least give the BOM a hearing. God foresaw that if the restoration were to have a chance of succeeding it was imperative that the Book of Mormon gain a foothold, and that would not have happened if it had been framed in modern language. The language style of the BOM was used for one reason only: to allay the fears and prejudices of the people. It does not best represent the way the Lord communicates. It is language from a certain moment in history, and was perhaps appropriate for the time, but is no longer. We might as well hold on to old doctrines as to insist on old language.

The Testimony of John was given to us in modern English. That was done deliberately in order to clearly communicate in a plain vernacular. As new revelation is added to the canon, we should expect that it too will be given in modern English. One of the great themes of this dispensation is that God desires to have a personal and intimate, familial relationship with each of us. Should our scriptures reflect a personal and intimate God willing to communicate with us in plain humility?

## MOVING ALONG

The second volume of the new scriptures is titled *The New Covenants*, and is comprised of *The New Testament* and the *Book of Mormon*. The *New Testament* is being updated in the same way as the Old Testament.

*The Book of Mormon* in the restoration scriptures differs from any other extant version. This version has been “renewed” by an exhaustive effort to correct mistakes introduced by scribes, editors, and typesetters. It benefits from a careful review of every edition of *The Book of Mormon* personally examined by Joseph Smith, and takes advantage of the vast body of literature compiled by the *Joseph Smith Papers Project* and Royal Skousen. Unfortunately, Joseph Smith did not complete the work of correcting the BOM text, even though he continued the labor until his martyrdom. However, all his corrections that could be found have been incorporated, including many corrections that Joseph made that are not included in any other edition of the BOM. The Lord has also seen fit to correct some verses that could not have been corrected using only existing manuscripts. The chapter breaks, which were originally designated by revelation, have been maintained.

The third volume of the restoration scriptures, titled *Teachings and Commandments*, is comprised of many of the sections found in the LDS *Doctrine & Covenants*. It includes works found in the LDS *Pearl of Great Price*, and materials produced in our day. Some of the sections included in the LDS D&C are not revelations or have dubious provenance, and were therefore left out. Several revelations received by Joseph Smith were never included in the LDS D&C, but are included in this volume. Every section has been closely compared to the manuscripts found in the *Joseph Smith Papers Project* and faithfully restored to their original form. For instance, the two letters sent by Joseph Smith to the saints from Liberty Jail are given in full to provide greater context than can be found in D&C sections 121, 122, and 123. Other letters and articles from Joseph and Hyrum are also included in this volume after being voted in by the assembly this summer.

The *Joseph Smith History*, as published in the *Times and Seasons*, is included in its entirety, as far as Joseph is known to have reviewed and approved it. This has resulted in a more expansive document than that found in the LDS *Pearl of Great Price*. Sections quoted in the *Joseph Smith History* that are identical to those found in the 1835 D&C have not been included a second time alongside the other sections. However, three of those found in the *Joseph Smith History* were *substantially changed by Joseph* from the original manuscripts (For example: Oliver’s gift of working with the rod was changed to read “the gift of Aaron.”) and so the two different forms have been put in the two different locations. (RE Sections 98, 2, 101, 4, 9)

The *Lectures on Faith* are included. These originally constituted the doctrine portion of the Doctrine and Covenants, and were never authorized by common consent to be removed from the scriptures. They have been restored to their proper place. They are printed in slightly larger font as was done in the 1835 edition and include the catechism, or question and answer portion, at the end of each lecture.

The *Wentworth Letter* has been included in its entirety to give context to the *Articles of Faith* outlined by Joseph Smith.

The *Book of Abraham* has been faithfully reproduced, while the *Book of Moses* has been moved to the JST Bible as intended by Joseph Smith.

New material given by the Lord through Denver Snuffer has also been included. In addition, a set of guiding principles will be included. An appendix is included at the end of the volume. So far, only an article titled *A Prophet's Prerogative* has been included. Other materials, such as proceedings from this conference, maps, or a glossary, may be introduced in the future. Let me say a word regarding progress on the *Guide and Standard*. The word is "prolonged." "Laborious," "protracted," and "distressing" are also words that come to mind. It has been a difficult delivery, in part because we were expecting a single little one and instead we were blessed with quintuplets — at least. Who knows? There may be more to come. I am referring of course to versions of the *Guide and Standard* that have been offered to the assembly after the one produced by Jeff Savage.

I used the word "blessed." It was not said sarcastically. It is a good thing, a very good thing, to have a group of people that are so dedicated to the ideal of Zion that they will give freely of their time and energy to help us understand their vision of how our little proto-Zions could operate. None of us has all the answers. And each of us has unique, even irreplaceable insights to offer. Whatever we may disagree about, let's acknowledge that Zion will be a collective effort depending on many and varied working parts.

Jeff was assigned to the task first, and finished first. It would be understandable if some felt consternation regarding the documents that arrived later and were produced by those who did not take part in the original effort. The original assignment came from the Lord through Denver to the committee, was given to Jeff who, with the help of his group, finished very well. As far as the scripture committee was concerned, that job was done. But here's the thing. It was never said by the Lord that the committee's effort would be the only effort. And it is certainly not the scripture committee's prerogative to say who else might be inspired to contribute.

***John 3:8 The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes from, and where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.***

It is difficult for us recovering gentiles to swallow the idea that revelation might come from any place, and not just from a sanctioned, government-stamped, central distribution hub. It's messy, or appears to be. So what do we do? The scripture committee has completed its *Guide and Standard*, but others apparently also feel called to contribute theirs. 90% of the assembly accepted the scripture committee's G&S, but is that good enough?

The answer probably depends on how we define this term: *mutual agreement*. That term is, of course, the Lord's and comes from the *Answer to the Prayer for Covenant*: **"I require a statement of principles to be adopted by the mutual agreement of my people."** Let me say a word regarding the term *mutual agreement*. That word is "difficult." "Unlikely," "grueling," and "essential" also come to mind. It has been pointed out that *mutual agreement* is more than a majority, more even than reluctant unanimity. It is an interlocking, polygonal, reciprocating latticework of agreement and understanding, where everyone is in agreement with everyone else. Boy-Howdy! How we gonna make that happen?

How exactly this will be accomplished is unknown at this point. We are not saying that a new statement needs to be written, or that those now opposed will or should simply drop their opposition. We are just pointing out what the Lord has required. And, please believe me when I tell you that none of this has anything to do with acquiescing to a vocal minority, although I imagine that it might look that way to some.

There are so few of us. We don't want any to be lost. After a decade of hearing God's word delivered by his messenger, look how few of us there are. How can we part without making every effort to reconcile opposing views and to come to mutual agreement? If the task requires us to get on our knees again, humble ourselves again, form a committee again (God forbid!), is that too high a price to remain the Lord's people, and to retain our fellowship? How then do we proceed?

The challenge that remains in front of us is not an intellectual one. In *The Answer* the Lord admonishes us for being "quarrelsome and proud," for having disagreements that are "jarring and sharp." He cautions us not to be "angry or to harshly criticize;" He compares us to Satan, the accuser. The Lord implies that our love for our fellow man is little more than lip service, and he assures us that had our hearts been right, we could have accomplished this light task long ago. Over and over the Lord questions our hearts, but only once does He even mention the actual content of the *Guide and Standard*. He says that the words therein should be "wise." You tell me. When the Lord looks at us, what is he worried about? I can't imagine that it is the doctrinal nuances or writing style found in our statement of principles that he questions. Our challenge is coronary.

One of the Lord's points of emphasis regarding the *Guide and Standard* is that the document is largely intended for "***others who know nothing, as yet, of my work now underway, and therefore the guide and standard is to bless, benefit and inform them...***" The role of repentant gentiles in the last days will be to recover the lost sheep of the house of Israel and no longer forsake them. Might I suggest that framing a guide and standard to bless and benefit them is our first step in recovering them?

How do we proceed? The *Answer to the Prayer for Covenant* tells us the way to start. ***Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity...if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you.***

Although none of us can see exactly how this effort will be accomplished. It at least seems clear that we should try again. Here again is the Lord: ***I require a statement of principles to be adopted by the mutual agreement of my people... if you cannot do so you will be unable to accomplish other works that I will require at your hands.***

Even though the scripture committee, and specifically Jeff, have invested a great deal in our current Guide and Standard, here is my plea to you on their behalf. Let us try again. We can't

forever kick this can down the road, but there is a window in the next two or three months, before the scriptures are published, in which we can make another attempt. 90% is not good enough. We must keep the flock together if we possibly can.

It is certainly true that our patience and long-suffering in pursuit of unity will be answered with Divine patience and long-suffering. And with the Lord's promised help, there is hope that we can succeed. We must succeed if we are to come to Zion. Different personalities with disparate approaches must come together in similitude of Heaven itself if we are to abide the Heavenly City. Where...

***The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and fating together; and a little child shall lead them. (2 Nephi 21:6)***

Therefore, as we take the step today of accepting these scriptures as our canon, the current *Guide and Standard* will temporarily be set aside until we have done all that we can do to accomplish what the Lord requires regarding a statement of principles accepted by mutual agreement.

BACK TO OUR REPORT:

All the materials in *Teachings and Commandments* have been ordered chronologically, except the *Prayer for Covenant, Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, and The Covenant*. They are used at the transition point between the prior and the current dispensation as introductory material.

#### ACCEPTANCE OF THE OPEN CANON OF SCRIPTURES

The scriptures have been the result of thousands of hours of labor by dozens of volunteers. They were prayerfully presented to the Lord, who was asked to accept the labor as our best attempt to preserve and recover the scriptures provided to us in the restoration through Joseph Smith.

We asked the Lord to continue the work of the restoration and allow his revelations, work, covenant, and blessings to roll forth with us, and that things kept hidden be uncovered, and a fullness be given to us as a people. The *Prayer* said this:

***It is written that those who will not harden their hearts will receive a greater portion of your word, until they know the mysteries of God in full... We seek to leave behind a hard heart, and to be open to receiving a greater portion of your word, and to know of your mysteries, and obtain your grace for us as a people, that we may become yours.***

***We have added only things to the scriptures as we have understood to also have come from you and would be pleasing to you... We ask that you accept these books as yours, so that people of faith may then rely upon this work as your word to this generation, as a standard for***

*governing ourselves, as a law, and as a covenant, to establish a rule for our faith, and as the expression of our religion, so we may have correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth.*

In His *Answer to the Prayer for Covenant*, the Lord stated:

*I commend your diligent labor, and your desire to repent and recover the scriptures containing the covenant I offer for the last days. For this purpose I caused the Book of Mormon to come forth. I commend those who have participated, as well as those who have offered words of caution, for I weigh the hearts of men and many have intended well...There is great reason to rejoice because of the work that has been done.*

*...the records in the form you have of the The Old Covenants, given from Adam until Moses and from Moses to John, are of great worth and can serve my purposes, and are acceptable for this time...As you have labored with the [other] records, you have witnessed the alterations and insertions, and your effort to recover them pleases me and is of great worth.*

*I, the Lord, say to you, ...what you have gathered as scriptures are acceptable to me for this time, and contain many plain and precious things. Nevertheless, whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain the greater benefit, because you need not think they contain all my words, nor that more will not be given, for there are many things yet to be restored unto my people.*

*And now I will accept what you have produced...*

We now invite you, as a body of believers assembled in this conference, to also accept the content of the scriptures project as our open canon of scriptures, not only as our best effort to recover what has already been given, but also as an expression of our willingness to receive more.

All those who choose to accept the scriptures as “the rule for our faith and the expression of our religion,” please stand...[give them a moment]...and say, “Yes.”

[They respond.]

Please be seated.....Thank you.