

## THE MOST IMPORTANT DISCUSSION

### YOU WILL EVER HAVE WITH A MORMON BY ANDY POLAND

Of all the discussions a Christian can have when witnessing to a Mormon, none is more important than discussing the reliability of the Bible. Every Mormon that converts to Christianity must have a reason to believe in the inspired words of the Bible. The task of convincing a Mormon of the reliability of the Bible is not an easy one, because distrust of the Bible is sown throughout Mormon teachings and Mormon scripture. However, if a Mormon becomes convinced that the words of the prophets and apostles have been preserved in purity in the Bible, nothing will do more to convince them of the errors of Mormonism and of the truth found in Jesus.

As a Mormon, one of the first times I read the *Book of Mormon* I came across the passage in 1 Nephi chapter 13 which told of the writing of the Bible by the apostles and prophets of the Jews. The angel of the Lord told Nephi that when the prophets and apostles wrote the words that God gave them they were preserved by the Jews in purity. The angel goes on to tell Nephi that the apostles would be killed and the words of the prophets and apostles would fall into the hands of the Gentiles. Then there would be a formation of the great and abominable church that would change the words of the prophets and apostles. The result of these changes would cause many to live in darkness without a chance to know God.

After reading this account, I began to realize that Nephi was talking about the Bible, and that he meant that the Bible in its current condition could not be trusted as coming from God but only from men. I was extremely grateful for the restoration of the gospel at that

point. God had fixed the problem by raising up Joseph Smith. That is, to restore the truths that were lost—through modern day revelation.

Although I thought I had received some great insight into the history of men, I had no idea how far I was being separated from the truth of God. The true history of what happened after the death of the apostles is more miraculous than I could ever have guessed.

To truly understand what God has done to preserve his word requires that we understand the history right around 70 AD. Just as the prophet Daniel foretold, the temple was destroyed after the coming of the Messiah. After the destruction of the Temple, Christianity was outlawed throughout the known world. The Christians grabbed their scriptures and went into hiding. There were three major groups that used the New Testament writings of the apostles—the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Western Orthodox churches, and the Gnostic churches. Each of these groups had differences in their beliefs and had reason to change the writings of the apostles and prophets. What is fascinating is that there were no changes made. Each of these groups preserved the original writings in Greek and translated them into other languages according to the countries they resided in. They copied and recopied the scriptures for hundreds of years. They broke away from each other as they realized the differences in their teachings could not be resolved. However, this is where the miracle occurred; today we have found nearly 6,000 copies of the New Testament in Greek. The origins of

these manuscripts come from each of these three major church groups. When we compare the writings of the Greek manuscripts to the others, we find no doctrinal discrepancies and only minor variations in grammar. In fact, time after time we find that the words of the apostles were preserved meticulously. Even more fascinating is when we consider the ancient manuscripts written in other languages. Nearly 20,000 manuscripts have survived. Again when we compare these writings to the Greek, we find miraculous preservation of the words of the apostles. It is almost unbelievable to say this—three differing church groups, thousands upon thousands of manuscripts, and each group of manuscripts agrees with the other.

How else can I say this? The *Book of Mormon*, which I treasured from my youth, simply got history wrong. The apostles surely were killed for their beliefs, but there was no universal Gentile church that rose up and changed the manuscripts. In fact, because there were three church federations, the word of God was preserved miraculously through thousands of manuscripts and across hundreds of years. I do not believe that we could have more convincing evidence for the preservation of the writings of the apostles in the New Testament.

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### (CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE) YOU WILL EVER HAVE WITH A MORMON

God has also given us wonderful evidence for the preservation of the Old Testament prophetic writings. By now almost everyone in the world has heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was so valuable because the scrolls contained all of the books of the Old Testament (except for the book of Esther) and they predated the time of Christ. What was more fascinating is when they were compared to the manuscripts available after the time of Christ; they verified the accuracy of the Hebrew without fail. The manuscripts were so close to the ancient Hebrew, they confirmed the tenacity of the Hebrew scribes to maintain the word of God.

My research and study into the history of the Bible has provided me with wonderful reason to believe that the actual words of the prophets and apostles have reached me as if they were speaking to me across time and space. The next question I was forced to answer was: How do I respond to their words? Do I believe them and accept them as the words of God, or do I ignore them as the writings of insane people? I had strong reason to give the apostles' words little credence, because of my dealings with Joseph Smith and his teachings. The reason why I kept researching was because it was becoming more and more clear to me that Joseph Smith did not know about the preservation of the Bible. The compelling nature of the apostles' testimony intrigued me. Each of them were willing to die saying they had seen Jesus rise from the grave. I know what it means to be committed to a belief to a point that you were willing to die for it. All of that commitment rides on one fact—you must believe in your story. If you do not believe that your story is true, there is no way that you would be willing to die for it. So what did the apostles claim to believe? They claimed they had spoken to a man who died then came to life, saw him eat meals with them, they touched him, spoke with him, and then saw him ascend into heaven. They were so convinced that this miracle occurred that they chose to believe that Jesus was God and gave up their lives as a testimony to that fact. After realizing the serious nature of their commitment to truth, I became convinced that Jesus had risen from the grave, and that he was indeed the incarnate representation of God.

I look back now on the words of Isaiah and Jesus with amazement. Isaiah said "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever" Isaiah 40:8. And the words of Jesus himself "Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words will never pass away" Matthew 24:35. After learning the true history of the Bible manuscripts, one can only marvel at the miraculous nature of Jesus' word. Indeed it is impossible at this time to believe that the word of God could pass away. There is not a book in history that has been more published and republished than the Bible. God's word has been preserved by sheer numbers. There is only one question that remains: Will you believe the testimony of the apostles?



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## From the Mailbag



**FROM CENTRAL, AZ:** We live close to the Temple near Safford and the missionaries are always coming to our home. We would love to have a DVD to show them. We are Christians and we have donated to your cause before. I think what you are doing is a wonderful thing. Enclosed please find a small amount, as we are only living on Social Security, but please find it in your heart to send us a DVD so we can share it with our neighbors, who are just about all Mormon. I am not saying they are not wonderful people, and we did go through their Temple during their open house, but there is just so much about their religion that I just can't swallow! God bless you in your endeavors to bring these wonderful people to see the light.

**FROM HUACHUCA CITY, AZ:** First, I want to apologize for not sending my pledged amount last month. Our budget couldn't afford it with some unexpected expenses. Everything is back to normal and enclosed is the help for May. I was sad to not be able to send the money then, because I want to help all I can. May God continue to bless you in your work to help the Mormons. And thank you for continuing to put out *The CROSS*. I look forward to reading it. My favorite part is the *Amazing Quotes*. I always read that first.

Thank you, and God bless.

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# AMAZING QUOTES FROM LDS CHURCH LEADERS

BY BOB BETTS

This time, the amazing Mormon quote is a bit unusual, because it is actually an unquote. That is, it's not what was said, but rather what was NOT said...what was omitted.

In the April 2012 issue of the LDS publication, *Ensign*, there is an article (the printed version of a devotional address given at BYU on October 23, 2001) by a member of the LDS "Quorum of the Twelve Apostles," David A. Bednar, entitled "The Atonement." On page 42 there is a subtitle, "Grace and the Enabling Power of the Atonement." Under the subtitle, he starts out by quoting from the LDS "Bible Dictionary." This is not a peer-reviewed Bible dictionary that could be used by any student of the Bible. It is the Mormon Bible Dictionary, defining Mormon and Biblical terms—the Mormon way.

In this case, David A. Bednar quoted the "Bible Dictionary" definition of "grace." Well, two-thirds of it, anyway. He quoted the first and second paragraphs, but not the third. David might argue that the third paragraph of the definition simply didn't contain anything relevant to the point of this part of his talk. Nevertheless, what is contained in the third paragraph has the most telling statements with regard to the LDS definition of "grace."

Whether the omission was intentional or not, the inclusion of this part of the LDS definition of "grace" into his talk would

have raised some eyebrows, if not actually challenged many Mormons to question the LDS version of salvation.

"Divine grace is needed by every soul in consequence of the fall of Adam and also because of man's weaknesses and shortcomings. *However, grace cannot suffice without total effort on the part of the recipient. Hence the explanation, "It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).* It is truly the grace of Jesus Christ that makes salvation possible. This principle is expressed in Jesus' parable of the vine and the branches (John 15:1–11). See also John 1:12–17; Ephesians 2:8–9; Philippians 4:13; D& C 93:11–14" [Italics added].

As any Christian student of the Bible knows, that is not the Greek definition of grace, as used and intended in the New Testament. Such a definition (in italics) contradicts the true meaning of "grace," which is the "undeserved" or "unmerited favor" of God.

And, of course, the Apostle Paul spelled out the true essence of salvation in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." [See also 2 Timothy 1:8-10].



## Mailbag Letters continued...

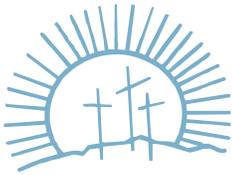
**FROM AUBREY, TX:** I can't even describe what a ministry you are to me. I am a Christian God has placed in a home school co-op group where all the other moms are Mormons. I've been developing friendships with them for the last two years and they have let me into their lives. One mom has left Mormonism. I am praying fervently for the others that they would be dissatisfied with what they are being taught and come to know the real Jesus and true God. Your "Out of Mormonism" podcasts have helped me TREMENDOUSLY in knowing how to talk to them and pray for them, and in identifying questions I can ask them that may encourage them to start asking questions and looking for the truth. I love your ministry and wish I could be there to pray with you every Monday night. May God richly enlarge His church through your efforts and bring glory to His beautiful name through you. Thank you for what you are doing. I long for all LDS to be free of the pressure and burden of this false religious system that keeps them in bondage.

**FROM PHOENIX, AZ:** I just finished reading the book, *Out of Mormonism* by Judy Robertson. This was part of my healing from my own bad experiences with Mormons. I joined the

Mormon Church in 1982 as a BYU student because I was impressed with them. In 1993, I moved to Arizona to get away from them, but they happened to find me, and talked me into going back to their church from 1997 to 2010. Although I took until Nov. of 2010 to actually be released, I started "falling away" in 2004 due to bad experiences with them. During mid-2010, I decided to go to a Baptist church for a year, instead of to Mormon meetings, where I learned intellectually that Mormons were wrong, and other Christians were correct. In 2011, I began attending a Lutheran church, which has many meetings and activities to choose from. Later, I decided to read *The Book of Concord*, by Dr. Martin Luther. It is his commentary on the Bible, and is much better than the Book of Mormon. Dr. Luther didn't claim to be a prophet, like Joseph Smith claimed to be. I'm not real sure if I'm going to be baptized as a Lutheran, but I believe that Lutherans have a better attitude towards their enemies than Mormons have.

**FROM DETROIT LAKES, MN:** Thank you for your wondrous ministry in attempting to deliver LDS out of bondage and darkness. And what courage you have to have in order to be

(Mailbag continued on back page)



# Concerned Christians of Mesa

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**Prayer Meeting / Concerned Christians / MONDAY NIGHTS**

Please come and spend time with us while we ask for God's favor to rest on the ministry of Concerned Christians. The time is Mondays, 7:00 p.m. at our office located at 525 East Broadway Road in Mesa, AZ. For more information, or request for personal prayer, call us at 480-833-2537.

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among the lights of the Mormon Temple in Mesa, AZ at Christmas time! In the Army, we used to hear the theme "Take the fight to the enemy!" The LDS are not our enemies, of course, but we take the fight to them in Christian love and concern.

**FROM LOS ANGELES, CA:** I just read your December newsletter and I would describe it as startling, sincere, and authentic - it causes me to send you some money and a word of support to keep up the good work!

**FROM TEMPE, AZ:** Thank you for persevering in heeding God's call to reach out to the LDS community with God's love. May we respond to the opportunities Christ presents us as we seek His kingdom. Thanks again!

**FROM KANSAS CITY, MO:** I'm a former RLDS member. I have been very blessed to have the right people in my life at the right time. Over the last four years I have done a more in

depth study of both RLDS and LDS. My daughter was dating a very fine young man that was a Mormon. I was able to witness to him through your help! It seemed to fall on deaf ears most of the time, but seeds have been planted... and I continue to pray for him and his family. Keep up the awesome work.

**FROM CYPRESS, TX:** Andy, you certainly have taken on an exceptional duty to follow after Jim and Judy [Robertson]. I have known them for years when they would come to Texas to speak to the many churches in this area. I have received your newsletter for several years. There is always something new to enlighten me, and I have been witnessing to LDS Missionaries for quite some time. I have enclosed a check to help out at this time and for all the mailing costs you incur for my mailings. Continue your great efforts to witness to the Mormon community.

