



2 Peter 1:19-21

Intro: [watch video](#) where Joel Osteen claims that Mormons are “brothers in Christ.”

I am not showing you this video as any kind of commentary on Mitt Romney. I don't share the opinion that Christians should not vote for a Mormon. I showed you this video clip to evaluate Joel Osteen statements about Mormonism for two reasons.

First, since the popularity of Mitt Romney and Glenn Beck, many Christians are starting to think that Mormonism really is just a branch of Christianity. Also, the Mormon Church is currently working hard to distance itself from the claim that it is a cult. The Mormon Church is trying to “normalize” its reputation as a mainstream religion using rhetoric very similar to Joel Osteen—Mormons love Jesus and they are really nice people. Statistics show that Mormons really are nice and very moral people, but the Jesus whom they claim to follow and love is not the Jesus of the Bible.

Since our topic is *Can I Trust the Bible*, the second reason for discussing Mormonism is to demonstrate the utter unreliability of Mormon Scriptures as compared to the absolute reliability of the inspired Word of God found in the Old and New Testaments.

Mormons have four holy books which they use for their doctrine and religious life.

- The Book of Mormon
- The Pearl of Great Price
- Doctrine and Covenants
- The Bible

Out of these four, the first three are considered to be infallible but the Bible is only infallible when it agrees with the first three. Their three infallible books are also published in a single volume.

The Book of Mormon came about when an angel appeared to Joseph Smith and gave him golden plates on which were written Egyptian hieroglyphics. It is claimed that Smith translated these golden plates through the power of God and in 1827, this became the book of Mormon. The problem is that Smith claims that the angel who gave him, the plates took them back when he was done so it was never possible to see the plates, attempt a translation or compare it to Smith's translation.

A similar event took place five years later. In 1835, Joseph Smith purchased four Egyptian mummies and ancient scrolls that contained Egyptian hieroglyphics. In 1835, no one knew how to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics but Smith claimed that, like he did with the golden plates, he had the ability to translate the ancient Egyptian language. His finished work became The Pearl of Great Price

In 1966, the original Egyptian scrolls were found in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and their authenticity was verified by the Mormon church. But since Egyptian hieroglyphics are understood, for the first time since the beginning of Mormonism in over one hundred years, Joseph's Smith's translation could be tested.



Before I show you that, here is the drawing that was next to the hieroglyphics. What would you guess this picture is describing? I realize we know a lot more about Egyptian culture than Joseph Smith did, but to me, this is obviously an illustration of the process of Egyptian embalming known as mummification. Not only did Smith purchase the Egyptian scrolls, but he also bought four mummies along with it, so he obviously knew what a mummy was.

Here is a portion of the hieroglyphics translated by experts.

"Osiris shall be conveyed into the Great Pool of Khons -- and likewise Osiris Hor, justified, born to Tikhebyt, justified -- after his arms have been placed on his heart and the Breathing permit (which [Isis] made and has writing on its inside and outside) has been wrapped in royal linen and placed under his left arm near his heart; the rest of the mummy-bandages should be wrapped over it. The man for whom this book was copied will breath forever and ever as the bas of the gods do."<sup>1</sup>

This is obviously describing just what it looks like—someone going through the process of mummification. The jars below the table probably held the internal organs of the man and were taken out before the body was wrapped.

Now that we have seen this picture and have read the expert translation, here is the exact same section of hieroglyphics translated by Joseph Smith.

"In the Land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my father, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence."<sup>2</sup>



The rest of Smith's translation is a horrific as this section. If this is all of the evidence you possessed, would you conclude that the Mormon Scriptures are historically reliable and to be trusted for faith and life? Remember the phrase from the [doctrinal statement of our church](#) in regard to Scripture? "Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises." Do you realize that Mormons would believe this about Joseph's Smith's writings? The only way you can ascribe to these teachings is to do

like this man is doing—bury your head in the sand and pretend that everything is fine.

If that were not enough to convince you, let me show you a famous quote from Smith that describes his view of God.

We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. These are incomprehensible ideas to some, but they are simple. *It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible.*<sup>3</sup>

Smith's teaching has led to the Mormon phrase, "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." Mormonism teaches that we all have a divine nature and really good Mormons will one day become a god and rule over their own planet, just as God rules over us today.

What I want to do with our remaining time is to demonstrate that if ten million Mormons can believe in their Scriptures with this complete absence of reliability, how much more should we as believers have complete confidence in the true Word of God.

Let me remind you of our first two principles we established two Sundays ago. The first principle is that of eyewitness testimony. The key phrase is found in verse sixteen of chapter one. *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* Please read that message if you want more details on this first principle.

The second principle was the historical reliability of the New Testament. There are 24,000 copies of all or portions of the New Testament as compared to only dozens or hundreds of other ancient writings. If secular historians accept these other ancient documents as historically reliable, how much more should we accept the Bible as historically reliable.

The third principle is Inspiration by the Holy Spirit and is found in our text from Peter's second letter.

*<sup>19</sup> And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, <sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

This description gets to the heart of how Scripture was written down and recorded for us. A common misunderstanding of Scripture is that the Bible was more or less dictated to the writers. This is called the dictation theory. This is what Joseph Smith claimed for the Mormon Bible. Smith simply translated the golden plates given to him by the angel, which is nothing more than dictation. While it is true that some of the Old Testament was dictated to the writers and prophets (the phrase "This says the Lord" is found 417 times in the Old Testament), the majority of it was not dictated.

If not by dictation, how then was Scripture written down? First, Peter offered two denials. Scripture did not come about

1. By the prophets own interpretation
2. By the will of man

Even in the parts where there was no "Thus says the Lord," Peter wanted to make very clear that Scripture was most definitely not the will or interpretation of any man. But instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. This verse reminds me of what the angel Gabriel said to Mary. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:29). How do you explain a virgin birth? Even if God explained it to Mary and to us, we could not understand it so the simple answer is that "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." It was a miracle of God that was worked through human agency, namely Mary, the mother of Jesus.

A similar thing is true with Scripture. How does the Creator of the universe reveal himself to his creation using words intended to be written down in a book that will abide for all eternity? The answer is that "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Scripture is a miracle worked by God through the human agency of the authors. They wrote in such a way that every word was exactly what God intended but at the same time the personalities and writings styles of the individual authors was maintained. The apostle Paul writes very differently from the apostle John. They use different styles, different word choices and themes. They are not at all alike yet both tell the same story and both are inspired Scripture.

We can't talk about the reliability of Scripture without bringing in 2 Timothy 3.

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* Scripture is literally "breathed out by God. We commonly use the word inspiration when referring to Scripture but it is more appropriate to speak of expiration. God expired his word—he breathed it out as his very breath. The writing of Scripture is part mystery yet we affirm that it is

the very Word of God—that we are not to add or take away even a part of a letter of its content. What Scripture says, God says.

The fourth principle is internal consistency, meaning that Scripture is internally consistent with itself. Even though it was written down over a period spanning fourteen hundred years by dozens of different authors, it is perfectly consistent with itself and never contradicts itself. A good example of this comes from Peter’s first letter.

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look (1 Peter 1:10-12).*

The OT writers knew something grand and beautiful was coming in the future. What they wrote would serve future generations more than it would serve them because they were writing about future events. Furthermore, they “searched and inquired carefully” and at the same time the “spirit of Christ in them was indicating” the sufferings of Christ. Do you see—there are several things happening simultaneously. The Holy Spirit is pointing at something in the future, the Holy Spirit is within them guiding them—they were carried along by the Holy Spirit as Peter says in his second letter—but they were just passive about the whole event. The writers searched and inquired carefully. They knew actively involved in the process.

A few weeks ago I preached on Isaiah 53. Let me take one section of that passage and see how these principles work together.

But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.

First, the phrase “thus says the Lord” appears 37 times in the book of Isaiah and the closest one to this passage in Isaiah 52:4. There is no question that Isaiah’s words are the words of God. These are not the prophet’s own interpretations not did they come about by the will of the prophet Isaiah.

Second the Holy Spirit was carrying Isaiah along. Even though we have a “thus says the Lord” statement, there is no indication that Isaiah had seen a vision or heard a voice from heaven and he merely copied down the words. The Holy Spirit carried him along. The Spirit of Christ within Isaiah was guiding his words.

Third, Isaiah was searching and inquiring carefully as he wrote. He knew that his words concerned future suffering of the Messiah. Isaiah did not know his name would be Jesus or who his mother and father would be or the exact date of his birth, but he would have known that the

Messiah would have been from the tribe of Judah and the family line of David because he would have searched through the Scriptures that he had to discern this.

Daniel did the same thing Jeremiah's words. In Daniel 9:2 we read, *I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.* Do you see what Daniel did? While he was an exile in Babylon, he picked up the scroll of the prophet Jeremiah and read this verse from Jeremiah.

*Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste (Jeremiah 25:12).*

Jeremiah had written this verse in the exact same year that Daniel was carried off to Babylon when he was about fifteen years old. Nearly seventy years later, Daniel “searched and inquired carefully” into other prophets and other Scriptures, including Jeremiah in order to understand God's will and plan. He found this prophecy stating that the Babylonian captivity would last seventy years so he knew that the exile would soon be over. So when Daniel wrote this down, was he guided by Jeremiah's words or by the Holy Spirit? Yes—both are equally true. Daniel did his homework, so to speak, but he was also carried along by the Holy Spirit. Again, this is what was happening with Isaiah when he wrote this amazingly precise prediction of the sufferings of the Messiah.

You see, the writers of Scripture were reading other Scripture. This is part of the reason that the Bible has this perfect internal consistency with itself. Isaiah would have read from Moses and other OT writers. Daniel obviously was reading Jeremiah. When Luke wrote his gospel, he “carefully investigated everything from the beginning.” He gathered eyewitness testimony from everywhere that he could but he also had a copy of the gospel of Mark in his hand while he wrote his own gospel.

Furthermore, Peter not only read extensively from Isaiah and other OT writers, but he also read Paul's letters. Listen to this from chapter of Peter's second letter.

*So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,<sup>16</sup> speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures (2 Peter 2:15-16).*

Several things can be drawn from this passage. First, Peter read Paul's letters—probably all of them. Second, he admits that there are some difficult things to understand in Paul's letters. This verse always give me comfort knowing that even Peter did not always understand Paul. Finally, and most importantly, Peter referred to Paul's letters as “Scripture.” Peter wrote, *There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do **the other scriptures**.* Peter has lumped together Paul's letters in the phrase “the other Scriptures” which means that Peter considered Paul to be writing Scripture!

The fifth and final principle is the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. The fact is that no matter how much evidence you throw at a person, not everyone will be convinced. There are skeptics and agnostics by the thousands who take the very same evidence for the reliability of the Bible and twist it to their own ends. The final proof as it were, happens when the Holy Spirit confirms the utter truthfulness of his Word in our inner being.

*For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:11-14).*

This is exactly what happens in our evangelistic efforts. It does not matter how much evidence we pile up to demonstrate the truthfulness of the gospel, many will remain blinded to the truth because they need the Spirit to convict them of sin and show them the truth.

But some might think that this is just a cop out, after all, isn't this what the Mormons do? They just believe and claim that God tells them that their Bible is correct and ours is wrong? The obvious difference is that the Mormon Bible starts with zero credibility and has only blind trust from its followers but the Bible that we have has multiple proofs to testify to its reliability and truthfulness and in addition to all of that, we have the Holy Spirit testifying within us that it is indeed true. Therefore, the Word of God is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires and trusted in all that it promises.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Klaus Baer, *The Breathing Permit of Hor. A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham*, p.119-120 as cited in *Joseph Smith Among the Egyptians*, by Wesley Walters.

<sup>2</sup> *The Pearl of Great Price* 1:1.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Press, 1938), p. 344-346, LDSCL. Italics in printed edition.