

# Mormonism from a Biblical Perspective

## Examining LDS doctrine and beliefs by searching the Bible

© Copyright 2008, LifeAfterJoseph.org, All Rights Reserved.

*All verses quoted from the New King James Bible, unless otherwise noted. Where the full Bible text is not represented, omissions are represented by ellipses (...). Summaries of sections of scripture as well as author additions to the text will be enclosed in brackets [ ].*

---

### Genesis, Chapter 13

**1 [Abram and his nephew Lot go their separate ways]**

### Genesis, Chapter 14

**1-17 [Lot and his family are taken captive, but Abram rescues them. Abram and his army bring back the spoils of war]**

**18-24 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he *was* the priest of the most high God... And he [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] tithes of all [the spoil]...**

Here we are introduced to a very strange Biblical character indeed. Latter-day Saints believe that this Melchizedek was the holder of a higher priesthood than the Aaronic. Joseph Smith, in his Joseph Smith Translation of portions of the Bible, expounds upon this man Melchizedek in great length, adding entire chapters of 'restored text' to the Bible. It should be noted that no scroll nor fragment of the tens of thousands of existing ancient Biblical texts has ever shown any corroboration of Joseph's changes to the Biblical text. The only reliable additional teaching we have concerning this man will come later on in the Psalms and the New Testament where we will find a very informative section showing a comparison of Jesus to Melchizedek. For the time being, we will allow him to remain mysterious. It should be pointed out that the Aaronic priesthood of the Bible is the priesthood that was required to be a High Priest. In LDS doctrine, the Aaronic Priesthood is a lesser Priesthood than a High Priest would possess.

### Genesis, Chapter 15

**1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: *I am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.**

**2-3 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless... to me thou hast given no seed...**

**4 ...the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, ...he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.**

**5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.**

**6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**

This may be the most important verse in the entire Old Testament. Certainly the apostle Paul seemed to think so as he referred back to it many times in teaching of God's plan of salvation in the New Testament. We have already discussed how the Lord, by calling things which are not as though they are, declares us righteous. This is exactly what we see here. Abram believed in the Lord – put his faith in Him – and the Lord declared him righteous because of it. This is what it means to be saved, being declared righteous by the Lord because of our belief in Him. Before Abram became the father of nations and before he underwent the requirement of circumcision, the Lord declared him righteous. Whatever the Lord speaks, is. All of creation was brought into being by His spoken word. Whom he declares righteous is righteous indeed.

**7-12 [God covenants with Abram to keep His promise]**

## **Genesis, Chapter 16**

**1-2 ...Abram's wife bare him no children... And Sarai said unto Abram... go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai... after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and [Sarai] gave her [Hagar] to her husband Abram to be his wife.**

There are three very noteworthy occurrences in this section of scripture. The first is Abram's patience to have waited ten years for the promises of the Lord. He was eighty five years old now, and it was looking more and more impossible with each passing year that he could ever become a father of many nations. The second, unfortunately, is his sin in finally taking things into his own hands. Rather than continue to wait on the Lord who would indeed give Sarai a child, he and Sarai came up with a great plan on their own. This is the second occurrence of polygamy in the Bible, and we see that it came from a place of sin and unbelief. We will also see that the result was heartbreak, sadness, and animosity. Again, without blatantly giving us either a stamp of approval or a condemnation of the practice, God seems to be telling us very clearly His position on polygamy.

**4 ¶ And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.**

Hagar began to look down on Sarai for being barren just as the rest of the people must have been. She had proved that Abram was able to have children, thereby proving that Sarai had been the problem all along. Barrenness was considered a cursing from God for a sinful woman, and so Hagar despised her.

**5-6 ...And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.**

Almost as quickly as the polygamous marriage had began, it resulted in a fractured family. Hagar had fled the community with her unborn child to escape the hardness of Sarai.

**7-10 ...And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under**

**her hands. I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.**

Yet again the Lord shows his mercy. Rather than condemn Hagar and her child, he promises to make of them a great nation.

**11-16 ...and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael...**

## Genesis, Chapter 17

**1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.**

Again we see the idea of being *perfect* and of *walking with God* going hand in hand. God is not asking Abram to take a literal walk with Him here. He is saying to Abraham, *be complete in your belief in me*.

**2 ...and thou shalt be a father of many nations... Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.**

God changes Abram's name, meaning Exalted Father, to Abraham, meaning Father of Many Nations. We see again how God calls things that are not as though they are. Abraham was the father of one son, Ishmael, who was causing great division among his two wives, and yet God sees him already as the father of many nations.

**6 ...This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised... and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.**

Here we see another token like the rainbow given after flood. The circumcision is a seal to remind Abram and his descendants of their commitment to God, just as it will serve as a sign to other nations that the Jews follow the God Yahweh.

**12-22 ...And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be... And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her... and thou shalt call his name Isaac...**

The Hebrew alphabet is interesting in that each individual letter has a meaning in and of itself. We have seen both Abram and Sarai's names changed by God. In both cases, an *h* was inserted into their names. Abram became Abra-h-am and Sarai became Sara-h. The Hebrew letter *h* is called Heth. It carries with it the idea of the breath of God. Just as one must expel breath to pronounce the sound, the speaking of the letter would carry with it the idea of the divine breath of God. The Hebrew word for *breath* is the same word used for *spirit*. Not only did these name changes change the meaning of their names, but it also symbolically showed that these two servants of God had as part of themselves the very Spirit of God.

**23-27 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house... and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin...**

Now this is faith! It is entirely possible that these were the first circumcisions ever performed. Not only did Abraham follow through with this troubling commandment from God, but he did it on the selfsame day.

As the apostle Paul would later point out in Romans, Abraham was counted as righteous by the Lord *before* this work of circumcision. He gives the compelling argument that salvation cannot come by works because it certainly did not for Abraham. He was counted as righteous through his faith, which then empowered him to do such great works. The works were a product of – a fruit – of his faith.

**[End]**