

# Mormonism from a Biblical Perspective

## Examining LDS doctrine and beliefs by searching the Bible

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*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 [ ].*

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### Genesis, Chapter 6

#### **1-4 There were giants in the earth in those days...**

These giants were considered to be an abomination upon the earth. They struck terror in the hearts of those who challenged them. They were at the heart of some of the greatest calamities the Jewish nation was to endure, including the reason they feared to enter the Promised Land and were then punished to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Although the King James Version translates it as *giants*, the actual Hebrew word for these giants is Nephilim. Latter-day Saints will recognize the name Nephi from the Book of Mormon within the plural name of this feared and loathsome adversary. It seems unlikely that a group of Israelites that would undoubtedly know their history with the Nephilim would name their son Nephi. It seems even less likely that this loathed name would then go on to become a title of honor for leaders of a righteous nation. It would be something akin to a righteous family naming their daughter Jezebel. The Jewish culture took their names very seriously. Names nearly always spoke of some characteristic of the child or something unique about its birth, or was a name giving glory and honor to God. Nephi is the first of many Biblical names that Joseph Smith appears to have borrowed from the Bible for re-use as characters in the Book of Mormon.

**5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth... And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth... But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.**

Here we find the first mention of a word that will appear 170 times in the Bible, and in many of the most theologically significant passages. Let us pause here and define what is meant by the word *grace*. It, like the word *atonement*, is a word that has taken on a meaning above and beyond its original meaning. It has been stretched, redefined, embellished, and twisted to mean as many different things as there are Christian denominations. In its most basic meaning – the meaning implied here - it simply means *favor*. Noah had found favor in the eyes of the Lord. God wanted to preserve Noah, so He did.

#### **9 ...Noah was a just man *and* perfect... Noah walked with God.**

Noah walked with God, just as Enoch had done before him. But rather than take him to Heaven as He had done with Enoch, God chose to save Noah and his family from the tribulation and judgement of the wickedness of the earth. This is the first mention of a man being perfect. It must be understood that it speaks to *completion* or *fulness* rather than actual perfection. In Psalms 14 and 53 (verse 3 in both chapters) we are taught that *there are none good, no not one*. The apostle Paul refers back to this teaching in Romans 3:10 when he reminds us that *there is none righteous, no not one*. A few verses later (v. 23) he

reaffirms that *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*. Jesus himself teaches us this in Matthew 19:17 where He declares *there is none good but one, that is God*. The perfection of man in Biblical language speaks of a completeness, an integrity of character, of being whole.

Noah had this wholeness or completeness because He *walked with God*. Like Enoch before him, Noah had a relationship with the Lord and had placed his faith in Him. God saved Noah because he knew Noah, and Noah knew Him. Had had found favor in the Lord's sight because of their relationship.

**10-22 [Noah faithfully builds the ark]**

## Genesis, Chapter 7

**1 And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.**

From a human point of view, righteousness comes in degrees. I can be more righteous some days than others. I can be 40% righteous on Monday, but 85% righteous by the time Sunday rolls around. We tend to look at righteousness as a temperature gauge of our religious works. If we are praying, fasting, tithing, attending meetings, and serving our fellow man, we consider ourselves more righteous. That is not the way God sees righteousness.

For God, righteousness is black or white, on or off, declared or undeclared. We see this clearly in this passage where God says *thee I have seen righteous before me*. This has no relation to how Noah feels about himself, but how God sees Noah. The apostle Paul tells us that God *calleth those things which be not as though they were*, Romans 4:17. This is talking of how God can see us as righteous. We are not, in fact, righteous. Not one of us. But God declares us righteous when we have put our faith in His ability to cover (atone) for our sins. Then when He looks at us, instead of seeing our unrighteous sinful selves, He sees the truly righteous Jesus who offered himself in our place. The only way God could have seen Noah as a righteous man is through his faith.

**2-7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.**

Noah was a descendant of Adam and Eve's son Seth. We see here that Cain's lineage did not survive the flood, making the idea that those with black skin – thought by some to be the mark of Cain - among us today could not have been descended from Cain. There is no reason to think that the mark placed on Cain was anything that would be handed down genetically. It was to mark him as one under the protection of God from vengeance, something his descendants would have had no need of.

**8-24 [The flood comes and Noah and his family are spared]**

## Genesis, Chapter 8

**1-19 [The rains finally cease, the flood waters recede, and they leave the ark]**

**20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean**

**fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.**

We see that Noah had a clear understanding of the sacrificing of life that is required to give new life, passed down to him through his fathers dating all the way back to Adam and Eve. This was undoubtedly done not only to give thanks and glory to God, but remind these new pioneers of the human race of the seriousness of sin. God had required the death of all living things on the earth, preserving only those on the ark, for the sinfulness of the world. This burnt offering must have been a solemn reminder for them to continue to live a life *walking with God* rather than in a way that was continually bringing death into the world.

**21-22 ...and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.**

This is God's first obvious warning to man about placing too much trust in the feelings and imaginations of his heart, which he calls *evil from his youth*. The prophet Jeremiah would later speak even more directly to this issue in Jeremiah 17:9; *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* For the Latter-day Saint, truth is revealed by a "burning in the bosom" or a strong feeling of the heart. God has spoken repeatedly about not giving over all our trust to such an unreliable messenger. That is the very reason He has preserved His word for us in the Bible. We must have something to compare the feelings of our heart against to determine if our hearts are indeed being *deceitful, desperately wicked, and evil from our youth*. God will not contradict himself. If our hearts are telling us something different than the preserved word of God, then we must defer to the word of God. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the word of God is the *discerner of the thoughts and intents of our hearts*.

**[End]**