

## **The Baptist Version of The Book of Mormon**

Protestant Doctrines within the Book of Mormon

by Lynn Ridenhour, Southern Baptist Minister

I'm a licensed Southern Baptist minister and I embrace the Book of Mormon. That is, I believe the truths recorded in it. No, I'm not a convert to the Mormon faith, nor am I a member of any particular "spin-off" restoration group such as the RLDS (Reorganized Latter-day Saints), Hedrikites, or Strangites. I'm still a Baptist minister. To be exact, I'm "charismatic Baptist." That is, I still embrace the "born again" experience. I still believe you're saved by grace. By the shed blood of Christ. Salvation is by faith alone in His finished work on Calvary. I still believe in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. I believe and embrace those cardinal doctrines of Protestantism.

And you know what?...

I still believe the Book of Mormon too!

I know. I can hear you now. "...A charismatic Baptist minister who believes the Book of Mormon?! Impossible. That's like a Protestant Pope..." No, it's not. It's not a contradiction.

The two go hand in hand, really--Protestant doctrine and the Book of Mormon. They're not at odds. The Book of Mormon is filled with Protestant cardinal doctrines, believe it or not. In fact, I discovered, the Book of Mormon is more "Baptist" than the Baptist hymnal in places. I know that's hard to believe, but it's so. I read the Book from cover to cover and found as a Baptist minister, there is absolutely nothing in it that contradicts the Bible.

For example, the book uplifts the blood of Christ (Mosiah 1:118), declares that salvation is only by God's grace (2 Nephi 7:42), defends the grand theme of salvation (Mosiah 1:108), and proclaims that salvation comes only through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ (Mosiah 3:8,9). Other themes such as repentance, atonement by Christ's blood, redemption, and forgiveness run like a scarlet thread through the book as well (Alma 3:86, Helaman 2:71, Alma 13:13, Mosiah 2:3,4). Thus, our "tongue 'n' cheek" title, The Baptist Version of the Book of Mormon. I'm telling you, the grand themes of Protestantism are found recorded through and through. From cover to cover.

A Word About My Background...

Reared in a small conservative Baptist church back in the hills of the Ozarks, I was taught with strong convictions that Mormons were no different from Jehovah Witnesses, Christian Scientists, or Armstrong followers. They all sooner or later knocked on your door. We were instructed by our parents to "...let none of them in the house. And don't buy their materials..." All were cults. Certainly the Mormons

were not within mainstream Christianity.

I was taught that the Book of Mormon was a lie. We have the Bible and no man was to add to the scriptures lest his soul be damned. And I was taught that the rapture could occur any minute. Establishing a literal kingdom on this earth was pure nonsense. And I believe my convictions were typical. Most protestant/pentecostal Christians today share similar sentiments.

So what are we faced with concerning the Book of Mormon? Is it...

Adding to the Bible or Duped by the Canon

"...You don't really believe in that book, do you?" Or "...you surely don't believe the Book of Mormon is equal with the Bible, do you?..."

These are questions my friends now ask me, wondering if I haven't erred from the truth.

What's my response?...

I have chosen to follow the style of the Master. When asked a probing question, He often responded with one. The Pharisees once asked Him about John the Baptist, and...

"...Jesus responded, 'I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you...'" --Matt.21:24

When my friends ask, "...do you believe in the Book of Mormon?" I respond, "I will answer that, but first I would like for you to answer my question, 'Why do you believe in the canon of scripture? Would you give me your reasons?'"

Most can't. They've never thought it through.

That's really the issue, you know—not whether or not I believe in the Book of Mormon, but whether or not we as Christians are to embrace the concept of canonization. For that's the perception here—that by embracing the Book of Mormon I've violated scripture's canon. My friends are convinced I've added to the Word of God. I'm convinced we've been duped by the canon.

To get to the point—not many evangelical Christians realize (I didn't), the concept of canonization became popular with the Church around the time of Constantine, a period when the Church became infiltrated with nationalism and worldly teachings. Closing the canon to 66 books was the outcome of man's wisdom and man's heresy. Canonization has its origin in worldly tradition, is not found in the Bible, and was not practiced by the early Church. And I'm aware—that's a shocker.

A bit of trivia--God would not end His book with the numbers '66.' That's one "six" short of 666—the number of the Anti-Christ. God's number has always been "seven," not "six."

I have discovered, there are two extra-biblical teachings propagated by Protestantism that must be dealt with before most of us will take the Book of Mormon seriously: 1) the doctrine of canonization, and 2) the teaching of the rapture. Both are cardinal doctrines of Protestantism and both are extra-biblical teachings. That is, neither is supported by the Word of God.

The other Protestant myth...

The Rapture

"...Joseph Smith can't be taken too seriously because he believed in a literal city of Zion." I must say, that doesn't sound so strange these days. Many evangelical Christians no longer embrace the rapture.

What about the rapture? Where did the doctrine come from? Did the early saints believe in it?

For eighteen hundred years the saints did not believe in the rapture, pre-tribulation, post-tribulation, or mid-tribulation. The teaching is new. In the light of church history, it's new. Again, perhaps that's a shock to some of us.

I find it very interesting—both the rapture theory and the restoration of the gospel came forth in the same year: 1830! When the Lord moves in the earth, the Devil usually attempts his imitation of the real.

For instance, which does the Bible teach: removal or restoration?

Joseph Smith, Jr. was called to restore primitive Christianity to the Church in 1830 and Margaret MacDonald, a fourteen year-old Scottish girl, went into a trance that same year. She described a vision where she saw the saints leaving the earth at the return of the Lord. Her "revelation" occurred while living in Port Glasgow, Scotland. The vision was recorded in two books written by R.N. Norton, M.D., and printed in London, England in 1861. Two Brethren ministers, Edward Irving and John Darby, popularized her vision. The Plymouth Brethren accepted the vision as valid and the rapture doctrine "took off" during prophetic meetings at Powerscourt House in Ireland.

Irving's views influenced C.I. Scofield, whose Bible notes popularized the new theory among fundamentalist/evangelical Christians in the West. The rest is history. However, as I said, many fundamentalist/evangelical Christians today have second thoughts about the doctrine, having re-evaluated their position. They

no longer believe Christians will be "raptured out" of the tribulation.

There they are—two Protestant myths that must be dealt with before one is likely to take the Book of Mormon seriously: the doctrines of canonization and the rapture.

Let's suppose...

...that God still speaks today—that the canon is still open—and that there's not going to be a removal of the saints but a restoration of His creation (which includes His people), then perhaps the message of the Book of Mormon is not so "far fetched" after all.

Speaking of the message of the Book of Mormon, what exactly is its message? What is its central theme? Restoration of the covenants in these latter days. That surprised me, blessed me, and witnessed to me.

No, the book is not meant to be used as a tool to proselyte you into some weird sect or cult. No, it's not meant to be used to "make a Mormon" out of you. The Book of Mormon is the most nonsectarian book I've ever read! It's meant for Catholics, for Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Charismatics, Seventh Day Adventists, for Baptists, Pentecostals...you name it. It speaks to all.

I'll say it again. The central message of the Book of Mormon is—restoration of the covenants in these latter days! And that message is meant for all God's children.

"...For behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have been taken away..." --I Nephi 3:168,169

Its Central Theme

Let's explore the central theme of the Book of Mormon—restoration of the covenants. Somehow our generation has overlooked the obvious: the Bible is a covenant document!

And what's a covenant?

It's the missing revelation among God's children, among the church at large. That's what it is. And how sad. Like Mephibisheth, the majority of today's Christians do not know they have a covenant with the King. And as believers we don't miss the covenant because we don't know we have one. We have no idea—we were destined to sit at the table with the King.

Like in King Josiah's time (II Kings 23), "covenant" has been forgotten among us. I would say—since the early 1800s we've lost the revelation. We're a generation

without a covenant, without a mandate, without dominion. Yes, today's Church, by and large, has taken away "...many covenants of the Lord...", has taken away from the gospel "...many parts..."

Let me give a brief prophetic history of the church age. John speaks of different ages in his book of Revelation. Seven churches represent seven approximate time periods. For example, Ephesus represents that period approximately 29 AD to 100 AD. Smyrna represents 100 AD to 300 AD. Pergamus, 300 to 350 AD. Thyatira, 350 to 500 AD. Sardis, 500 to 1500 AD, the dark ages. Philadelphia, 1500 to 1830 AD, the Reformation. And the Church at Laodicea, 1830 to present—the age of the lost and forgotten covenants of the Lord.

Please consider that last point—we're living in an age of "...the lost and forgotten covenants of the Lord."

Selah—ponder that for a moment.

The Laodicean age—no real commitment to covenants and contracts. The fruit of the Reformation (sectarianism) changed the concept of biblical salvation "oh so" subtle among the majority of Protestants. And in the process, the covenants were lost. Protestantism for the past 150 years has preached salvation by decision-making, not covenant-keeping. That's a caricature of the real thing. "...Invite Jesus into your heart," "...Make a decision for Christ," are buzz words of the modern Protestant movement. The problem is—you don't make a "...decision for Christ." You enter into a covenant with Him. You make a covenant with the King of the universe that begins in time but lasts throughout eternity. There's a world of difference between entering into a covenant and making a decision. One is binding throughout eternity; the other, more times than not, is mere mental gymnastics.

You say, "Ridenhour, you're just playing with words...semantics." No, I'm not. The implications are far deeper than a mere play on words.

The Book of Mormon is a revelation of the covenants being restored among His people in these latter days. When a people sign a contract they act differently (especially if the contract is with God!). They weigh the consequences. In these latter days we will again begin to know what it means to sign a contract with the Lord of Hosts, and act accordingly. A revelation of biblical salvation will return to his people. Praise His name.

In other words, the central message of the Book of Mormon is---to repent and come unto Christ, which means to establish a covenant with Him. And that message is coming to light in these latter days. And that's why I embrace the Book of Mormon. Our generation knows very little, if anything, about establishing a covenant with Christ. Protestantism doesn't teach it. Unfortunately, most of us are products of "cheap grace" and "decision-making" Sunday School preaching.

Hosea described a people who were "...half baked" (Hosea 7:8). Like a cake not turned. Sadly, my generation fits the bill.

Listen to the words of the ancient prophet.

"...Behold, I [the Christ] have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin; therefore whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive; for of such is the kingdom of God." --3 Nephi 4:51

To make sure we understand...

Scriptural salvation is entering into a personal covenant with Him; thereby coming unto Christ for all our temporal and eternal needs and wants. The contract is binding throughout eternity while effectual in time.

Let's go on...

Back to the title of our pamphlet, "The Baptist Version of the Book of Mormon." Setting aside the title's "tongue 'n' cheek" tendency, there is an element of truth I'm getting at. As I said earlier, having read the Book of Mormon through as a Baptist minister, I was astonished at how often I kept running into Protestant themes. Themes such as: the plan of salvation, salvation by faith in Christ, salvation by grace alone, repentance, the gifts of the Spirit, the filling of the Spirit, sanctification, justification by faith, forgiveness and redemption. I could go on.

I kept thinking as I was reading, "...wouldn't it be wonderful if there were some piece of writing available that listed all these themes from the Book of Mormon." I searched and searched for such a work and never found it. (I've noticed, since becoming a part of this wonderful restoration movement, there are very little, if any, writings concerning the restoration written to "non-restoration" saints.) So I decided, I would write to non-restoration believers. Make available materials on the restoration to our Protestant, Pentecostal, Catholic brethren. Hence, another booklet.

What I'm going to do for the remainder of this booklet is list various Protestant themes taken from Book of Mormon scriptures. If I seem a bit repetitious, it's deliberate. I want you to get the full impact of the spirit of the wording. And my prayer is—may the Spirit of God bear witness to your spirit as you read.

First, Book of Mormon scriptures on the...

Born Again Experience

I was delightfully surprised to find so many "born again" scriptures in the Book of

Mormon. For example...

"...For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold, I am born of the Spirit. And the Lord said unto me, Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men, and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; Yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God..." --Mosiah 11:186-188 (all scriptures quoted from RLDS 1908 version)

That verse, I must say, sounds so "Baptist." And I believe every word of it.

"...And now I say unto you, that this is the order after which I am called; yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren; yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; Yea, to preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you, the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again; Yea, thus saith the Spirit, Repent all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power and dominion..." --Alma 3:85-87

"...Now I say unto you, that ye must repent, and be born again: for the Spirit saith, If ye are not born again, ye can not inherit the kingdom of heaven..." --Alma 5:24

"...after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God..." --Mosiah 11:190

"...Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? .." --Alma 13:49

"...Yea, and from that time, even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost..." --Alma 17:22

"...my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God..." --Alma 17:21

"...and now behold, O my son, the Lord doth give me exceeding great joy in the fruit of my labors; for because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God..." --Alma 17:23

"...Now my son, I would not that ye should think that I know these things of

myself, but it is the Spirit of God which is in me, which maketh these things known unto me: for if I had not been born of God, I should not have known these things..." Alma 18:6

Author's Comments:

One of my favorite hymns of the early restoration saints is: YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.

A ruler once came to Jesus by night,  
To ask Him the way of salvation and light;  
The Master made answer in words true and plain  
"Ye must be born again."

"Ye must be born again,  
Ye must be born again,  
I verily, verily say unto thee  
Ye must be born again."

--W.T. Sleeper

One other thing. I discovered, Joseph Smith meant exactly what I meant when he used the phrase "born again." He wasn't saying one thing and meaning another; that is, he wasn't playing with semantics. I found the above scriptures to be so comforting to my spirit. So believable. So "...plain and precious" to the soul.

Here's another Protestant theme...

Plan of Salvation

"...he has made these things known unto us beforehand, because he loveth our souls as well as he loveth our children; therefore in his mercy he doth visit us by his angels, that the plan of salvation might be made known unto us as well as unto future generations. O how merciful is our God!..." -Alma 14:38

"...For what could I write more than my fathers have written? For have not they revealed the plan of salvation?..." -Jarom 1:3,4

"...if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partook of the tree of life, he would have lived for ever, according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; Yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated..." --Alma 19:85,86

Plan of Redemption

"...Now if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the

foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead...--  
Alma 9:42

"...if it were possible that our first parents could have gone forth and partaken of the tree of life, they would have been for ever miserable, having no preparatory state; And thus the plan of redemption would have been frustrated..." --Alma 9:44,45

"...And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world...--Alma 9:49

"...God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness; For on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God..." --Alma 9:52,53

What blessed scriptures. What a blessed theme—the plan of redemption!

"...But God did call on men, in the name of his Son, (this being the plan of redemption which was laid,) saying: If ye will repent, and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine only begotten Son..." --Alma 9: 54

"...he expounded unto them the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world..." --Alma 12:119

"...And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures, from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state, and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name..." --Alma13:45

"...I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance, and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might be no more sorrow upon all the face of the earth..." --Alma 15:53

"...therefore, only unto him that has faith unto repentance, is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption. Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you; yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save..." --Alma 16:217,218

What a verse!

"...I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for

behold, now is the time, and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you. For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God..." --Alma 16:227,228

"...Is it not as necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people, as well as unto their children?.." --Alma 19:26

"...And now remember, my son, if it were not for the plan of redemption, (laying it aside,) as soon as they were dead, their souls were miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord..." --Alma 19:92

And now we turn our attention to one of the most central and cardinal Protestant doctrines of all...

## Salvation

"...And then at that day, will they not rejoice and give praise unto their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation?.." --I Nephi 4:20

"...And it came to pass that Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand, Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation? And he answered and said, Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught. And Alma said, If thou believest in the redemption of Christ, thou canst be healed. And he said, Yea, I believe according to thy words. And then Alma cried unto the Lord, saying, O Lord our God, have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith which is in Christ. And when Alma had said these words, Zeezrom leaped upon his feet, and began to walk..." --Alma 10:95-100

What a powerful passage!

"...Yea, even that ye would have so much faith as even to plant the word in your hearts, that ye may try the experiment of its goodness; and we have beheld that the great question which is in your minds, is whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be no Christ. And ye also beheld that my brother has proven unto you, in many instances that the word is in Christ, unto salvation..." --Alma 16:203,204

"...these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles by the gift and power of the Lamb; And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation..." --I Nephi 3:185,186

"...And then at that day, will they not rejoice and give praise unto their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation?..." --I Nephi 4:20

"...Yea, and all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord, saith the prophet...--I Nephi 5:256

"...I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer: for thou hast beheld, that in the fullness of time, he cometh to bring salvation unto men..." --II Nephi 1:63

"...For the Spirit is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free..." --II Nephi 1:65,66

"...Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say, O Lord, I will praise thee for ever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation..." --II Nephi 3:50

"...Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord, JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore, with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation..." --II Nephi 9:133,134

Sure sounds like Isaiah!

"...For there is nothing which is good, save it comes from the Lord; and that which is evil, cometh from the devil. And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth, ye will be saved..." --Omni 1:45-47

"...For behold as in Adam, or by nature they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins. And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given, nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent..." --Mosiah 1:115,116

"...But men drink damnation to their own souls, except they humble themselves, and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent: For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever; But if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come, when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people..." --Mosiah 1:118-121

Sounds like some good ole Baptist preaching to me!

"...For behold, if the knowledge of the goodness of God at this time, has awakened you to a sense of your nothingness, and your worthless and fallen state; I say unto you, if ye have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long suffering towards the children of men, And also, the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world, that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his trust in the Lord...And there is none other salvation, save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved..." --Mosiah2:8-9,12

"...There is no other name given, whereby salvation cometh, therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God..." --Mosiah 3:11

"...And it came to pass that Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand, Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation? And he answered and said, Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught. And Alma said, If thou believest in the redemption of Christ, thou canst be healed. And he said, Yea, I believe according to thy words. And then Alma cried unto the Lord, saying, O Lord our God, have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith which is in Christ. And when Alma had said these words, Zeezrom leaped upon his feet, and began to walk..." --Alma 10:95-100

Again, what a powerful passage!

"...Yea, behold, I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven, save it be this Jesus Christ of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved..." --II Nephi 11:39

"...And I pray the Father in the name of Christ, that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom, at that great and last day..." --II Nephi 15:15

The Lord Jesus Christ

Like the Bible, the central theme of the Book of Mormon is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There are over 160 passages in the Book of Mormon that speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. There were 22 men named in the Book of Mormon who saw Christ. Some form of Christ's name is mentioned on an average of every 1.7 verses. The New Testament mentions a form of Christ's name on an average of every 2.1 verses. The name of the Savior appears nearly 25 percent more frequently in the Book of Mormon than in the New Testament. When we realize that a verse usually consists of one sentence, we cannot on the average read two sentences in the Book of Mormon without seeing some form of Christ's name.

"He is Lord" rings loud and clear from its pages like a London cathedral choir harmonizing on a Sunday morning. The sound is resonant throughout the book's pages. The Spirit's witness is there. That same Jesus I discovered in the Bible is also present in the pages of the Book of Mormon. Praise be to His holy name!

I mention but a few of the many passages that speak of our blessed Savior.

"...And according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God..." --II Nephi 11:36

"...Yea, behold, I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven, save it be this Jesus Christ of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved..." --II Nephi 11:39

"...And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also, that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God; and that he manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost..." --II Nephi 11:78

What a blessed verse.

"...And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers. And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God..." --II Nephi 12:82,83

"...I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell..." --II Nephi 15:7

I have always liked this verse. One of my favorites, for sure.

"...Wherefore, we search the prophets; and we have many revelations, and the spirit of prophecy, and having all these witnesses, we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus, and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea..." --Jacob 3:7

"...And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men, even through faith, on his name..." --Mosiah 1:102,103

"...We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things, who shall come down among the children of men..." --Mosiah 2:4

"...And I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come; yea, the Son, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world; yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name..." --Alma 3:83,84

"...And according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins..." --Alma 4:10

"...And it came to pass that there were many who died, firmly believing that their souls were redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ; thus they went out of the world rejoicing..." --Alma 21:74

"...O remember, remember, my sons, the words which King Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world..." --Helaman 2:71

"...I have reason to bless my God and my Savior Jesus Christ...that he hath given me and my people so much knowledge unto the salvation of our souls..." --III Nephi 2:103

"...And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God..." --III Nephi 2:109

"...As many as were converted, did truly signify unto the people that they had been visited by the power and Spirit of God, which was in Jesus Christ, in whom they believed..." --III Nephi 3:63

"...Behold I am Jesus Christ, the son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name..." --III Nephi 4:44,45

That name which is above every name, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is found throughout the pages of this blessed book—the Book of Mormon.

On to another central Protestant doctrine...

Repentance

"...And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they can not be saved in the kingdom of God. And if they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; For the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, hath spoken it..." --II Nephi 6:48-50

"...For behold, I say unto you, That as many of the Gentiles as will repent, are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent, shall be cast off; For the Lord covenanteth with none, save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel..." --II Nephi 12:77,78

"...And the Father said, Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my beloved Son..." --II Nephi 13:14

"...Believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you..."  
--Mosiah 2:16

"...Except they repent, and turn to the Lord their God, behold, I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies..." --Mosiah 7:32

"...The time is at hand that he must repent, or he can not be saved..." --Alma 3:55

"...Preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you, the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again..." --Alma 3:86

"...Thus saith the Spirit, Repent all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power and dominion..." --Alma 3:87

"...The Spirit saith unto me, yea, crieth unto me with a mighty voice, saying, Go forth and say unto this people, Repent, for except ye repent, ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of heaven..." --Alma 3:89

"...Now I say unto you, that ye must repent, and be born again: for the Spirit saith, If ye are not born again, ye can not inherit the kingdom of heaven..."  
--Alma 5:24

Sounds like Nicodemus and Jesus in John chapter three, doesn't it?

"...Melchisedec having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood, according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchisedec did establish peace in the land in his days..." --Alma 10:12,13

"...And now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words unto them, he stretched forth his hand unto them and cried with a mighty voice, saying, Now is the time to repent, for the day of salvation draweth nigh..." --Alma 10:18

"...And we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe

on his name..." --Alma 12:180

"...And also, what is this that Ammon said: If ye will repent ye shall be saved, and if ye will not repent, ye shall be cast off at the last day?..." --Alma 13:37

"...There was a time granted unto man, to repent, yea, a probationary time, a time to repent and serve God..." --Alma 19:84

"...And it came to pass that they did repent, and inasmuch as they did repent, they did begin to prosper..." --Helaman 2:49

"...Blessed are they who will repent, and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved..." --Helaman 4:70

"...O all ye that are spared, because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you? Yea, verily I say unto you, If ye will come unto me, ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me. Behold I am Jesus Christ, the son of God..." --III Nephi 4:41-45

On to another central Protestant doctrine...

Faith

"...And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father concerning the things which he saw in a vision; And also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost; which power he received by faith on the Son of God; And the Son of God was the Messiah who should come..." --I Nephi 3:23-25

"...Behold they are righteous for ever; for because of their faith in the Lamb of God, their garments are made white in his blood..." --I Nephi 3:117

"...We are made alive in Christ, because of our faith..." --II Nephi 11:46

"...Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save; Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men..." --II Nephi 13:28,29

"...I have charity for my people, and great faith in Christ, that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment seat..." --II Nephi 15:8

"...Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith,

and he will console you in your afflictions..." --Jacob 2:49

"...Beloved brethren, be reconciled unto him, through the atonement of Christ, his only begotten Son. That ye may obtain a resurrection, according to the power of the resurrection which is in Christ, and be presented as the first fruits of Christ, unto God, having faith, and obtained a good hope of glory in him, before he manifesteth himself in the flesh..." --Jacob 3:16,17

"...For he had said unto me, Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall receive it. And I had faith, and I did cry unto God, that he would preserve the records; And he covenanted with me that he would bring them forth..." --Enos 1:24-26

"...And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord; and I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites. And it came to pass, that after I had prayed, and labored with all diligence, the Lord said unto me, I will grant unto thee according to thy desires, because of thy faith..." --Enos 1:17,18

"...There are many among us who have many revelations: for they are not all stiff-necked. And as many are not stiff-necked, and have faith, have communion with the Holy Spirit, which maketh manifest unto the children of men, according to their faith..." --Jarom 1:8,9

"...Wo unto him who knoweth that he rebelleth against God; for salvation cometh to none such, except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ..." --Mosiah 2:4-6

"...We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things, who shall come down among the children of men. And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words, the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come..." --Mosiah 2:4-6

"...Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things both in heaven and in earth; Believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; Believe that man doth not comprehend all things which the Lord can comprehend. And again: Believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you: And now, if you believe all these things, see that ye do them. And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness, and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceeding great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness,

and his goodness and long suffering towards you unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily..." --Mosiah 2:13-21

"...This day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him, and have become his sons and his daughters..." --Mosiah 3:9

"...And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God, to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body? I say unto you, Can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day, Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth..." --Alma 3:27-32

"...And now as I said concerning faith: Faith, is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith, ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true. And now, behold, I say unto you; and I would that ye should remember that God is merciful unto all who believe on his name; therefore he desireth, in the first place, that ye should believe, yea, even on his word..." Alma 16:143,144

"...If ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith; yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. Now we will compare the word unto a seed..." --Alma 16:151,152

Truly, one of my favorite passages in the Book of Mormon.

"...Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith, for it was by faith that Christ shewed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead..." --Ether 5:7

And now, perhaps the keystone doctrine of the Protestant reformation...

Grace

"...Redemption cometh in and through the holy Messiah: for he is full of grace and truth..." --II Nephi 1:71

"...How great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise. Wherefore, he is the first fruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men..." --II Nephi 1:73-76

"...O the wisdom of God! his mercy and grace! --II Nephi 6:19

"...And remember after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved..." --II Nephi 7:14

The Book of Mormon, like the Bible, teaches that salvation is by grace through faith.

"...My soul delighteth in his grace, and his justice, and power, and mercy, in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death. And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people, that save Christ should come, all men must perish..." --II Nephi 8:11,12

"...I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come; yea, the Son, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world; yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name..." --Alma 3:83,84

"...I have come, having great hopes and much desire that I should find that ye had humbled yourselves before God, and that ye had continued in the supplicating of his grace, that I should find that ye were blameless before him..." --Alma 5:4

"...not many days hence, the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people, and to answer their prayers..." --Alma 7:40

"...Blessed are they who will repent, and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved. And may God grant, in his great fullness, that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace, for grace according to their works. And I would that all men might be saved..." --Helaman 4:70-72

"...The Lord spake unto me, saying, Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; and if men come unto me, I will shew unto them their weakness. I

give unto men weakness, that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak thing become strong unto them..." --Ether 5:27,28

...May the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you for ever..." --Moroni 9:28

"...Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot. And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen." --Moroni 10:29-31  
The end.

I find it both uplifting and somewhat unique that the Book of Mormon ends by focusing on the themes of: coming unto Christ, God's grace, the shed blood of Christ, the power of God, sanctified in Christ, the covenant, and the remission of our sins.

How Protestant!

There you have it—The Baptist Version of the Book of Mormon: Protestant Doctrines within the Book of Mormon.

- ...Born Again Experience
- ...Plan of Salvation
- ...Plan of Redemption
- ...Salvation
- ...The Lord Jesus Christ
- ...Repentance
- ...Faith
- ...Grace

What a book!

Perhaps the late John Henry Evans (1872-1947) said it best when he penned an overview of the Prophet's life with typical nineteenth century eloquence:

"...Here is a man," says Evan, "who was born in the stark hills of Vermont; who was reared in the backwoods of New York; who never looked inside a college or high school; who lived in six States, no one of which would own him during his lifetime; who spent months in the vile prisons of the period; who, even when he has his freedom, was hounded like a fugitive; who was covered once with a coat of tar and feathers, and left for dead; who, with his following, was driven by irate neighbors from New York to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri, and from Missouri to Illinois; and who, at the unripe age of thirty-eight, was shot to death by a mob with painted faces.

Yet this man became mayor of the biggest town in Illinois and the state's most prominent citizen, the commander of the largest body of trained soldiers in the nation outside the Federal army, the founder of cities and of a university, and aspired to become President of the United States.

He wrote a book which has baffled the literary critics for a hundred years and which is today more widely read than any other volume save the Bible..."  
--Joseph Smith, *An American Prophet*, 1933 preface

Joseph Smith "...wrote a book which has baffled the literary critics..." So true.

One other quote. Hear Henry A. Wallace, one of our late Vice Presidents:

"...Of all the American religious books of the nineteenth century, it seems probable that the Book of Mormon was the most powerful. It reached perhaps only one percent of the United States, but affected this one percent so powerfully and lastingly, that all the people of the United States have been affected." --New York Times, Nov.5, 1937

## Summary

Let's focus briefly on the man, Joseph Smith. What kind of man was he? The man whom God used to commence the restoration in these latter days. What did he have to say concerning truth and doctrine?

Well, first of all, Joseph was extremely tolerant of sects, of those not sharing his Christian point of view. This is a side of Joseph that's not well known even by those inside the restoration movement, let alone by those outside it.

On one occasion, in a sermon, he said, "...If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear down on them? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better. I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do, only by force or reasoning, for truth will cut its own way. Do you believe Jesus Christ and the gospel of salvation which he revealed? So do I. Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of

union and friendship. I am just as ready to die defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination." --Sermon, 1843

That last statement especially was quite a statement; "...I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian..."

"...Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other..." is also quite a statement.

While mayor of Nauvoo, Joseph passed an ordinance "...that the Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Latter-day Saints, Quakers, Episcopalians...and all other religious sects and denominations whatever, shall have free tolerance and equal privileges in this city..."

It was "against the law" not to show charity and tolerance toward those of other sects in the city of Nauvoo, the city Joseph built.

Again, what kind of man was he?...

One Sunday morning—among a group of prominent politicians, Attorney Butterfield, Judge Douglas, Senator Gillispie, and others—these gentlemen wanted to know about Joseph's Christian beliefs. Butterfield asked what the main difference was between his faith and that of other Christians.

Joseph responded,

"...The most prominent difference is this: Sectarians all circumscribe by a peculiar creed, which deprives them of the privilege of believing anything not contained therein. The Latter-day Saints, on the contrary, have no creed, but stand ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest from time to time."

I thought that was well put. In other words, truth remains dynamic. Revelation of truth continues throughout our lifetime. Creeds, on the other hand, tend to become static and inflexible with time.

One last anecdote...

The Prophet is appealing to the President of the United States on behalf of his people. Terrible atrocities have occurred back in Missouri. He had obtained a meeting with President Van Buren. While at the capital, the Prophet preached the gospel to bureaucrats. One of the representatives, a certain Matthew S. Davis from New York state, tells about one of the meetings held in the capital by Joseph.

This United States representative, who met Joseph Smith face to face, I believe

answers our concerns (better than I could ever address them) in a letter he sent to his wife back home. The congressman writes...

"...I went last evening to hear 'Joe Smith,' the celebrated Mormon, expound his doctrine. I, with several others, had a desire to understand his tenants as explained by himself.

He is not an educated man; but he is a plain, sensible, strong-minded man. Everything he says, is said in a manner to leave an impression that he is sincere. There is no levity, no fanaticism, no want of dignity in his deportment. In his garb there are no peculiarities; his dress being that of a plain, unpretending citizen. He is by profession a farmer, but is evidently well read.

During the whole of his address, and it occupied more than two hours, there was no opinion or belief that he expressed, that was calculated, in the least degree, to impair the morals of society, or in any manner to degrade and brutalize the human species. There was much in his precepts, if they were followed, that would soften the asperities of man towards man, and that would tend to make him a more rational being than he is generally found to be. There was no violence, no fury, no denunciation. His religion appears to be a religion of meekness, lowliness, and mild persuasion.

Towards the close of his address, he remarked that he had been represented to be a Savior. All this was false. He made no such pretensions. He was but a man, he said: a plain, untutored man, seeking what he should do to be saved.

Throughout his whole address, he displayed strongly a spirit of charity and forbearance. I have taken some pains to explain this man's belief, as he himself explained it. I have changed my opinion of the Mormons. They are an injured and much-abused people."

"...I have changed my opinion..." said the U.S. representative.

Concerning the Book of Mormon and the man, Joseph Smith, it is my prayer—so have you.r

About the Author:

Lynn Ridenhour grew up in the heart of Missouri near the Ozarks. A licensed Baptist minister for over 38 years, Lynn read the Book of Mormon and had a marvelous conversion experience to the restoration gospel as proclaimed by Joseph Smith.

Dr. Ridenhour has a Ph.D in literature with a specialty degree in composition theory from the University of Iowa. He has taught creative writing in both Christian and secular universities. Dr. Ridenhour has also pastored Baptist

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Lynn is the founder of WinePress Publishing Co., and has a heart for evangelism. Paperback copies of Dr. Ridenhour's booklets may be purchased for \$3 per copy.

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Should you want Dr. Ridenhour to come and speak in your church, or organization, simply email him, giving him the details. Lynn travels extensively for speaking engagements, sharing his testimony and conversion.

Lynn, his lovely wife, Linda, and their teenage daughter, Lori, make their home in Independence, Missouri.