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THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures are the inspired record of God's revelation of Himself, His nature, character, and will. They contain divine revelations because they bring to men concepts of these divine truths of His personality.

These revelations were made to people who were chosen guardians of the Word of God and whose responsibility it was to communicate it to all mankind. The Scriptures, therefore, are the source, as well as the result, of inspiration. They were written under the direction and under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures, rather than being one book, are compiled of many books. They are not limited to the Bible but include also the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. What is said for the Bible can also be said for the other two. They are the Word of God to the world. Paul writes, "All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

HOW THE SCRIPTURES ARE VINDICATED

By a number of ways the Scriptures can be vindicated. Here are several that others have found to be helpful:

1. By a careful and exact study of the Holy Scriptures themselves, according to their own testimony, origin, and design;
2. From the interpretation of the Church in regard to their full meaning;
3. By reading with prayer and under proper conditions;
4. Through studying the background of how and why they were written;
5. By analyzing the effect they have had on the Church.

The Saint must ascertain what is meant by "inspiration" by complete submission to it. A person whose own life has not felt the rebirth of the Holy Spirit cannot expect to understand inspiration completely. It is more difficult for one to read the Scriptures and get the proper point of view unless he belongs to God's family.

It is the duty of every searcher of the Scriptures not to accept a doctrine because it is modern, but because it is true.

THE DIVINE ELEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES

The divine element of Scriptures is made apparent through prophecy. All the prophets felt that their inspiration came not from within, but from without. They felt a divine call from God and were obliged to speak out in His name (see Jeremiah 15:16, 23:35; John 15:16; 2 Nephi 5:2-5; D&C 6:2b). At other times they were commanded to write, that the generations yet unborn could have the benefit of their knowledge and inspiration (see Isaiah 8:1; Jeremiah 36:28; Revelation 21:5; 1 Nephi 2:3; D&C 22:24). The inspiration received was often regarded as an answer to prayer.

The divine element of the Scriptures can be discerned in the laws and worship in the Church. Especially is this true in the symbol of the ordinances. It is found in Church marriages, caring for the needs of the poor, and administering to the needs of the aged. Prayer services, preaching, and Church school also enhance the divine element of worship.

The divine element of the Scriptures can be ascertained by the Word of God becoming flesh in us. Even the Church courts reflect the divine justice of God in dealing with the wayward and offenders of the Church.

When one needs forgiveness, where could he find greater help than in the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:10ff) and in Psalm 51? When one needs courage, what greater words could be read than "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23) or "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27)? When one needs comfort and peace to his soul, where could he find it better than in the life of the Lord? When one needs a pattern for the Kingdom of God, read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, 7).

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

It has been said that when God speaks and men listen, lives are changed. When lives are changed, communities and nations are changed. Most men want to live full and satisfying lives, but they need guidance. The best place to find that guidance is in the Word of the Lord. There are many questions that man asks himself and to which there are no answers outside of God and His Word. God gives the only answers to such questions as, “Why am I here?” “Where am I going?” “What is my place in life?” and “How am I to know and find true happiness and eternal life?” God can and will give us the answers we need to hear if we will only stop hurrying and listen and learn.

Man finds the true abundant life only as he associates with God. Man cannot fully associate with God unless he has God’s Holy Spirit; and we cannot have God’s Holy Spirit until we are obedient to His divine laws. We cannot know the full truth until we know God, Who is the fullness of truth. Men do not need answers doled out to them—they need to find them through association with the Father and His Holy Scriptures.

GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

Too many times we consider the Scriptures as belonging to a generation that was strange and far removed from us. However, in reading the Scriptures, we find the people of the Old Testament had many of the same problems, temptations, failures, and successes that we have. Human nature has always been the same; men have always had the same questions to be answered and similar problems to be faced.

The discovery we must make is that God speaks through the Scriptures. His purest language is in the symbol of the ordinances. The man who speaks for God in prophecy limits God because of his own limitations; but when God speaks through His ordinances, the meaning is pure and undefiled. Reading the Scriptures opens our eyes, that we might see who He really is and what He is doing in the world today and—still better—what He is doing in our lives. We will never quite hear what He had to say to Israel through the prophets until we are able to hear what He says to us through them.

God has spoken; the whole Scriptures bear witness that this is true. Our Scriptures bear out that God is a living God, not a dead one. The same Spirit that gave vision and understanding to the prophets can and will dwell in us today, and it will help to take away our blindness and confusion. By the warm influence of God’s Holy Spirit, He can and will speak to us through His Holy Scriptures. This has been the experience of thousands of people who have been willing to listen and hear God’s Word.

The Scriptures are not like any ordinary book. At the heart of the Scriptures is the testimony of Jesus Christ, the central figure of human history. They bear record of how the world can be regenerated and molded into a perfect society. The remedy for the frequent misuse of the Scriptures is not to read them less but to read them more.

SCRIPTURES AND THE TESTIMONY OF MEN

There was a time when the Scriptures did not exist. Living always comes before writing. Man had to have experience with God before he could write about it. How, then, did the Scriptures start, and what is the story behind their production?

The story of the Scriptures begins with the advent of man many years before Israel became a nation. Before the sacred Scriptures were ever written, a revelation of God came to man and was passed from one generation to another. God chose Moses to reveal His will and bring a new understanding of His power, love, and purpose. The people could look back and bear testimony of God’s saving grace to them when their nation was headed for destruction and as they were delivered from bondage. At Mount Sinai they entered into a covenant with God, which proved to be a foundation upon which they built their future nation.

It would have been simpler, perhaps, if God had just chosen men at different dispensations of time and dictated the Scriptures to them and let them write them down. However, that was not God’s way of working. His Word first entered into men’s lives so that it first became clothed with human experiences. Suffering had to be endured by His servants and children before they could bear testimony of God’s love and power. No true child of God could keep God’s truth for himself alone. He

had to share it with others to satisfy his inward longing for companionship with man and God.

The Word of God is God's own truth, with power to redeem any man or nation who is willing to hear, listen, and accept with an open heart.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the Scriptures? How do they differ from other books?
2. What do the Scriptures tell us about man? How can scripture be called both human and divine?
3. What are ways the Scriptures can be vindicated?
4. Tell of three scriptures that meet specific human needs and tell what that need is.

6. List questions of eternal importance which can be answered only by God and by answers found in the Scriptures.
6. Why are the Scriptures not just one book? Why do we need to believe in an open canon of scripture?
7. When do scriptures become most meaningful to us?
8. Why must we accept the Scriptures if we are to grow in the likeness of Christ?