

SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOK OF MOSES

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Moses | VOLUME: Pearl of Great Price | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

The Book of Moses serves as a foundational text for Latter-day Saint theology, presented as a restoration of the 'lost' words of Moses that were removed from the biblical record due to wickedness. It radically reinterprets the Genesis narrative. Chapter 1 introduces a cosmic framework where God reveals 'worlds without number' to Moses and declares His work is 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.' The subsequent chapters retell the Creation and Fall, but with significant theological deviations from traditional Christianity: Satan's rebellion is depicted as a pre-mortal conflict over human agency; the Fall of Adam and Eve is celebrated as a necessary transition to allow for reproduction and joy; and the Gospel of Jesus Christ—including faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost—is preached and practiced from the time of Adam. The text culminates in the story of Enoch, who builds a utopian city called Zion that is so righteous it is taken up into heaven, establishing a central eschatological hope for Latter-day Saints to build a 'New Jerusalem' on earth.

KEY FIGURES

God (The Man of Holiness), Jesus Christ (The Only Begotten), Moses, Satan, Adam, Eve, Enoch, Cain (Master Mahan), Noah

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE FORTUNATE FALL (FELIX CULPA)

Assertion: The Fall was a necessary, positive step in God's plan to allow for human reproduction and the experience of joy through opposition.

"Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption (Moses 5:11)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the Fall (Genesis 3, Romans 5:12) is viewed as a tragedy that brought spiritual death and corruption into a perfect creation. It was not God's will but a violation of it. The Book of Moses redefines this event: Eve declares that without the transgression, they would have had no children and known no joy. This suggests that God's command not to eat the fruit and the command to multiply were mutually exclusive, forcing Adam and Eve to choose the 'better' path of transgression to fulfill the 'higher' law of propagation. This makes sin a prerequisite for righteousness.

2. THE PRE-MORTAL EXISTENCE AND COUNCIL

Assertion: Humans existed as spirits before birth; Satan rebelled in a pre-mortal council seeking to destroy agency.

"Satan... came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind... wherefore give me thine honor. (Moses 4:1)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text implies that human identity extends backward into a pre-mortal past. Moses 4 depicts a council where Jesus and Satan present competing plans for human salvation. Satan's plan involved removing agency to ensure no soul was lost, while Jesus offered to uphold the Father's will and human agency. This establishes a theology where humans are not merely creatures of dust breathed into life by God, but beings with a pre-mortal history and potential co-equality with the divine.

3. ANACHRONISTIC CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES

Assertion: Adam and the patriarchs knew the specific name of Jesus Christ and practiced baptism by immersion.

"And he [Adam] was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. (Moses 6:64)"

Evangelical Comparison: Biblical theology (Hebrews 1:1-2, Galatians 3:24) presents the Law and the Prophets as shadows leading to the revelation of Christ. The Book of Moses flattens this history, claiming Adam was baptized in Jesus' name and received the Holy Ghost. This removes the distinctiveness of the New Covenant and suggests

that the 'Christian' church has existed on earth whenever the priesthood was present, only to be lost through apostasy and restored.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The theological gap is foundational. In the Book of Moses, God is an exalted Man ('Man of Holiness') who weeps because of human suffering, suggesting a God subject to emotional pain and perhaps time (Open Theism parallels). Furthermore, the 'Fortunate Fall' doctrine changes the problem of evil; sin becomes a necessary mechanism for growth rather than a rebellion to be remedied. Finally, the soteriology is works-integrated from the start: Adam is saved not just by looking forward to the Messiah, but by performing specific Christian ordinances (baptism) which are framed as eternal laws.

Shared Values:

God as Creator; Reality of Satan and temptation; Necessity of repentance; Wickedness of humanity leading to the Flood; Enoch walking with God

Friction Points:

- 1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds thousands of words to the biblical canon, claiming to correct the 'flawed' Bible.
- 2. [Major] Sola Fide – Establishes baptism as an absolute requirement for salvation even for Adam (Moses 6:64).
- 3. [Major] Anthropology (Original Sin) – Denies Original Sin's guilt ('children are whole from the foundation of the world' - Moses 6:54) and frames the Fall as positive.
- 4. [Critical] Theology Proper – God is described as 'Man of Holiness' (Moses 6:57), supporting the LDS doctrine that God is an exalted man.

Semantic Warnings:

"Salvation"

In Text: Often synonymous with 'Eternal Life' or 'Exaltation' (living as God lives), distinct from mere immortality.
Evangelical: Deliverance from the penalty and power of sin, granting eternal life with God.
Example: *Moses 1:39 distinguishes 'immortality' (resurrection for all) from 'eternal life' (God's quality of life).*

"The Gospel"

In Text: A system of laws and ordinances (faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost) existing eternally.
Evangelical: The 'Good News' of Jesus' finished work (1 Cor 15:1-4), historically fulfilled in the New Testament.
Example: *In Moses 5:58, the 'Gospel' is preached by angels to Adam, implying the system of ordinances predates the historical cross.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Immortality (resurrection) is universal; Eternal Life (exaltation) is conditional upon obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

How Attained: Through the Atonement of Christ, accessed by faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, reception of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.

Basis of Assurance: Personal revelation and the validity of one's ordinances/covenants.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Explicitly rejects Sola Fide by mandating water baptism as a prerequisite for the Kingdom of God (Moses 6:59: 'by the water ye keep the commandment'). Contrast with Romans 3:28.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

- 1. Worship God only (Moses 1:15)
- 2. Call upon God in the name of the Son (Moses 5:8)
- 3. Repent and be baptized (Moses 6:52)

4. Teach these things freely unto your children (Moses 6:58)

5. Keep a book of remembrance (Moses 6:5)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Seek to establish Zion (unity/no poor)

2. Accept Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible as superior to the canonical text

3. View the Fall as a necessary step for progress

Ritual Requirements:

1. Baptism by immersion (modeled by Adam)

2. Animal sacrifice (as a similitude of the Only Begotten)

3. Reception of the Holy Ghost

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In Moses 6, Adam is baptized in the name of Jesus. How does this fit with Hebrews 1:1, which says God spoke in times past by the prophets but 'in these last days' by His Son?

2. Moses 5:11 suggests Eve was glad she sinned because it allowed her to have children. Does this mean God's command to 'multiply' and His command 'not to eat' were contradictory?

3. If the 'Gospel' with baptism and the Holy Ghost was fully present with Adam, why does the Bible depict a progressive unfolding of the covenant through Abraham, Moses, and David?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The God Who Weeps – This passage highlights a desire for a God who is not distant but deeply affected by human suffering. This points to the Cross. [John 11:35 ('Jesus wept') shows God's empathy, but the Cross (Romans 5:8) shows His solution—not just weeping over sin, but defeating it.]

2. Zion (The City of Holiness) – The longing for a society of 'one heart and one mind' with 'no poor among them' reflects the human longing for the Kingdom of God. [Revelation 21:1-4 promises the true New Jerusalem where God dwells with man, achieved not by human social effort but by Christ's return.]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Perfectionism/Works-Righteousness [Severe] – The text establishes that even Adam had to perform ordinances to be saved. The example of Enoch's city (Zion) sets a standard of communal perfection required for translation/exaltation, creating immense pressure to be 'pure in heart' to avoid being part of the 'residue' that is destroyed.

2. Epistemological Uncertainty [Moderate] – By undermining the completeness of the Bible ('take many of them from the book'), the believer is left dependent on the modern prophet to know what is true, removing the stability of a fixed canon.

3. Ontological Pressure [Severe] – If God is an exalted man and man is to become God (as implied by the 'Man of Holiness' title and eternal life definition), the gap between Creator and creature vanishes, placing the burden of self-exaltation on the believer.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (Seership) and Personal Spiritual Witness.

Verification Method: Adherents believe by the testimony of the Holy Ghost confirming the text's truthfulness, independent of historical manuscript evidence.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the historical reliability and fixed canon of Scripture (Jude 3, 2 Timothy 3:16). The Book of Moses relies on the authority of a modern prophet to rewrite ancient texts without manuscript support.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Dictated by Joseph Smith between June 1830 and February 1831.

Authorship: Joseph Smith (claimed as translation of Moses).

Textual Issues: The text relies on the KJV English (including errors and italics) as its base, inserting expansions into the English text rather than translating from Hebrew manuscripts.