


USING THE
TOOLS 
HELPS
 CONTAINED IN THE
 LATTER-DAY SAINT EDITION
 OF THE SCRIPTURES

BY BRUCE H. WOOLLEY

This address was given August 12, 1993, at the 11th semiannual conference of Collegium Aerculaprium in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

When Spencer W. Kimball became prophet, seer, revelator, and president of the Church, he implemented a plan to leave, as part of his prophetic legacy, a set of scriptures that would allow Church members to learn more about the Savior than any previous generation. Sometime after he was sustained, he called a committee to begin exploration of the development of such a set of scriptures. The committee was chaired by Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve.

During the early committee deliberations, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was authorized to become a publisher of the King James Version of the Bible. As a result, the committee was able to consult all of the standard works. In the previous (1922) edition

of the scriptures, chapter headings, footnotes, and cross references were written for the triple combination by Elder James E. Talmage; however, there were no annotations available for the Bible. Now all of the standard works can be studied together as testaments of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first LDS English edition was printed in 1979. The first LDS Spanish edition of the triple combination became available in January 1994 with the Spanish Bible to follow.

The publication of the LDS edition of the scriptures has been proclaimed by many from both within and outside the Church as one of the most significant achievements in Biblical publishing. *An official of Cambridge University Press has been quoted as saying that the 1979 publication of the new Latter-day Saint edition of the King*

James Version of the Bible was the most significant event in Bible publication in over a hundred years. Certainly no Church member, prior to this publication, has had such a marvelous, beautiful, and comprehensive tool for studying and teaching the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.

In teaching about the LDS edition of the scriptures, Elder Boyd K. Packer stated:

With the passing of years, these scriptures will produce successive generations of faithful Christians who know the Lord Jesus Christ and are disposed to obey His will. . . . The older generation has been raised without them, but there is another generation growing up. The revelations will be opened to them as to no other in the history of the world. Into their hands now are placed the sticks of Joseph and of Judah. They will develop a gospel scholarship beyond that which their forebears could achieve. They will have the testimony that Jesus is the Christ and be competent to proclaim Him and to defend Him. . . . These references constitute the most comprehensive compilation of scriptural information on the mission and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ that has ever been assembled in the history of the world." (Ensign, November 1982, p. 53; emphasis added)

The scriptures (along with the statements and writings of the living prophets) are the most important books and writings on the earth today. Each Latter-day Saint should become as familiar with their content as anything they have read or studied. Sadly, this is not the case for the most part. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "Gospel scholarship is woefully lacking in the Church and in the world. There [are] only a handful of people now living who have an intelligent and comprehensive, working knowledge of the recorded revelations. None know as much as they should" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:200-01; emphasis added).

President Spencer W. Kimball said, "I find that when I get casual in my relationships to divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows, and the spirituality returns" (Spencer W. Kimball, address to Seminaries and Institutes personnel, Brigham Young University, July 11, 1966).

Elder Marion G. Romney stated, "I don't know much about the gospel other than what I've learned from the standard works. When I drink from a spring I like to get the water where it comes from the ground, not down the stream after cattle have waded in it. . . . I appreciate other people's interpretations, but when it comes to the gospel we ought to be acquainted with what the Lord says and we ought to read it" (Seminaries/Institutes Coordination Meeting, Brigham Young University, April 3, 1973).

MAJOR FEATURES

There are many unique features and helpful tools found in the Latter-day Saint edition of the scriptures. One of the most significant is the coordination of references, footnotes, and markings with all four of the standard works. A few of the additional features are listed briefly:

A

The Bible is the exact King James text. In a meeting of seminary teachers, Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated that one of the methods he used to enhance his scriptural scholarship was to mark a new set of scriptures on an annual basis. Elder McConkie's method can certainly enhance everyone's scriptural comprehension. Thus markings and cross references made in previous editions can readily be transferred to the new edition.

B

Each chapter of the new edition provides a descriptive heading for that particular chapter. These descriptive headings were written by Elder Bruce R. McConkie to provide a concise, correlated expression of historical and theological chapter contents. A condensed overview of the contents of the standard works can readily be achieved by reading each chapter heading consecutively. It will also provide the student of the scriptures an understanding of the specific doctrinal concepts presented in a chapter.

Two examples to illustrate the value of reading the chapter headings occurred in my teaching at the MTC in Provo. One Sunday, as I was teaching the young elders and sinners, I told them that if they would read the chapter headings from Genesis 1 through the Pearl of Great Price they would have an unparalleled experience with the scriptures. That evening at the conclusion of my gospel study class with the senior missionaries, two elders came into the room, and one had tears streaming down his cheeks. He said, "Elder Woolley, I want to tell you something. I was in your class this morning when you challenged us to read the chapter headings." He continued, "You need to understand that I'm dyslexic, and in my whole life I have read only one book cover to cover, and that is the Book of Mormon. It took me four years to read it, and I cannot tell you anything that I have read." He continued, "Here in the MTC I cannot memorize any discussions. I cannot memorize any scriptures. I just can't make it here in the MTC. So I made up my mind that I was going to go to the president of the MTC tomorrow and tell him that I cannot serve a mission. I have to go home. But I have been in my room all day reading the chapter headings." He said, "I'm very slow. I'm only part

way through the Old Testament, but for the first time in my whole life I understand what I'm reading. So I'm not going to go to the MTC president. I'm going to go on my mission." I've had three letters from that elder, and he has yet to memorize a discussion, but there have been many people enter the waters of baptism after feeling his sweet, humble, sincere spirit.

Another time an elder at the MTC approached me and said, "Elder Woolley, this morning I heard you tell us that we should read the chapter headings. So, I've been reading them today. Would you please read my patriarchal blessing?" I said, "No. I don't read other people's patriarchal blessings. That's between you and the Lord." He said, "Then read one paragraph in my blessing. I received my blessing when I was 12, and I'm leaving the MTC tomorrow morning for my mission." So I read that paragraph and it said, "When you arrive in the mission field, you will have an overview of the scriptures that will allow you to immediately begin teaching the Savior and His mission." He looked at me and said, "The chapter headings are the answer to my patriarchal blessing."

C

The reader of this edition will also find running heads at the top of each page. These heads list the name of the book, the chapter number, and the first and last verse on the page. The margin at the top and bottom of each page can also be valuable for writing additional personal notes.

D

The footnotes at the bottom of each page provide extensive added insight as they lead the student of the scriptures to additional material from all of the standard works. Note that the lettering for the footnotes begins with the letter *a* with each verse. This is the first time that this method has been used in publication of the standard works. These footnote entries can generally be divided into three major categories.

1. Footnotes headed by six different types of capital letters. (These letter footnotes are explained on the page facing the beginning of the Book of Genesis in the LDS edition of the Bible.)

a. GR denotes helpful information concerning Greek terminology and meaning. Most of these GR footnote entries are found in the New Testament.

A HEB denotes helpful information concerning Hebrew terminology and meaning. These HEB footnote entries are almost all found in the Old Testament.

In fact, there are only two HEB footnote entries found in the New Testament (Romans 9:29a and Hebrews 2:7a).

c. IE provides an explanation of idioms and difficult constructions. An idiom is a statement that does not provide a literal meaning to anyone outside of the culture. For example, a modern sports idiom could be, "In the third inning, Jackson died on third." Generally the Hebrews didn't want the Gentiles to understand their scriptures, so they used idioms extensively. For example, IE footnotes in the Book of Isaiah provide clearer understanding to the meaning of Nephi's statement: "Isaiah spoke many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews. For I, Nephi, have not taught them many things concerning the manner of the Jews" (2 Ne. 25:1-2).

d. OR is an abbreviation for Old Roman. These footnotes define and describe alternate words to clarify the meaning of ancient or archaic English expressions.

e. JST provides many of the Prophet Joseph Smith's doctrinal changes that he made in his revision of the Bible (Joseph Smith Translation). If the Prophet's revision is short (eight lines or less), the changes are found on the bottom of the page in italics. If the changes are extensive and/or lengthy (nine lines or longer), they are found in the appendix at the back of the Bible.

f. TG refers the student to the specific topic listing in the topical guide located as the first of five Bible appendices.

g. HC indicates *History of the Church*. B. H. Roberts wrote or edited two histories of the Church. One, the documentary *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, was taken from the diary and personal writings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is in seven volumes and covers the period of the Prophet's life and the interim period from the time that the Prophet was martyred until Brigham Young became President of the Church. The other, *A Contemporary History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, is in six volumes and covers historical events from the time of the Prophet's parents to that of Roberts himself. The HC footnotes in the LDS edition of the scriptures refer to the documentary *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

2. Footnote entries also contain cross-references to other scriptures on the same topic or event. This edition, for the first time, contains cross-references to all of the standard works.

3. Some footnote entries also contain editorial notes of clarification and enhancement. These entries may come from varied sources, but mostly include teachings of the living prophets.



E

The Bible appendix contains five major enhancements to the Latter-day Saint edition of the scriptures.

1. The topical guide is a 598-page scriptural concordance, which includes over 2,800 topics of specific interest to Latter-day Saints. Each of the topics is listed in alphabetical order and is thus easily located. Important scriptures from all of the standard works are listed for each topic and are recorded in the order of the Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

2. President Kimball wanted each reader of the scriptures to have ready access to an excellent Bible dictionary. The dictionary selected was an abridged *Cambridge Bible Dictionary*. Definitions were revised to reflect meanings consistent with doctrines of the restored gospel with additional definitions of importance to the Latter-day Saint. This work contains definitions of over 600 words and is found on pages 599-793 of the appendix. One significant part of the dictionary is the expanded, comprehensive *Harmony of Gospels*. The original work for this section was prepared by President J. Reuben Clark Jr. in his *Our Lord of the Gospels*. The current version of *Harmony of Gospels* provides references from all four gospels in a sequential listing of the events in the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ. *Harmony of Gospels* is found on pages 684-96 of the Bible dictionary.

3. The Joseph Smith Translation section of the appendix contains excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible that are too lengthy to be quoted on the bottom of each page. The modifications made by the Prophet

Joseph Smith that are nine lines in length or longer are included in this special section found on pages 797-813.

4. A gazetteer is a dictionary of geographical names. This part of the Bible appendix contains alphabetical listings of places and locations discussed in the Bible. Each entry is followed by a letter and number in bold print (the map grid) followed by a number that is not in bold print (the number of the specific map).

5. The last division of the Bible appendix is a 24-page section that contains 22 colored maps depicting geography of important periods of Biblical history.

F

There are four black-and-white maps located at the end of the Doctrine and Covenants depicting important places and locations of LDS Church history mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants. There is no gazetteer for these four maps.

G

The triple-combination index is also a compilation of topics of interest to the Latter-day Saint. Although there is overlap, the index is generally more doctrinally oriented than the topical guide and is an additional triple-combination reference for locating scriptures on doctrinal subjects.

CONCLUSION

Elder Boyd K. Packer has stated, "[This] work affirms an acceptance of, a reverence for, and a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Follow these references and you will open the door to whose Church this is, what it teaches, and by whose authority—all anchored to the sacred name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer, Our Lord" ("How to Use the Tools in the New LDS Scriptures," video segment no. 5, in Family Home Evening Video Supplement, VHS 53276 [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987]; emphasis added).

President Harold B. Lee wrote, "All that we teach in the Church ought to be caught in the scriptures. If we want to measure truth, we should measure it by the four standard works, regardless of who writes it. . . . This is the standard by which we measure truth" (*Improvement Era*, January 1969, p. 13; emphasis added). President Spencer W. Kimball wrote, "I am convinced that each of us, at some time in our lives, must discover the scriptures for ourselves—and not just discover them once, but rediscover them again and again" (*Ensign*, September 1976, p. 4; emphasis added). □