

“Truth without Love is too hard; Love without Truth is too soft”  
Living Faith Church

# Through the Maze

—www.BeyondMormonism.com—

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## Mormon Misinterpretation

Mormonism often cites the Bible in support of its odd and unorthodox doctrines. Very often the Bible verses Mormons cite *in no way* supports Mormon dogma. I can think of several examples:

- Baptism for the dead
- Three Heavens
- The “sticks” of Judah and Joseph
- The Three Nephites

### The Three Nephites

The Book of Mormon claims that Jesus, after his crucifixion, visited the North American continent and organized His church, calling apostles and establishing a full-blown religious hierarchy.

At one point (3 Nephi: 28) as Jesus is about to take his leave of his twelve North American (Nephite) Apostles, He asks them, “What is it that you desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?” (3 Nephi 28.4)

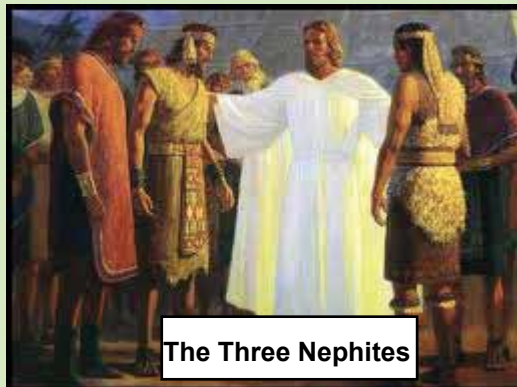
Nine of the Apostles answered right away that they wished, when they had lived “unto the age of a man,” that they should go to heaven. Jesus said, OK, after you are 72 years of age you will go to heaven.

But three of the

Nephite Apostles were reluctant to make their wishes known. So Jesus said He knew what they really wanted: the same thing His Apostle John the Beloved had asked for when Jesus departed the Apostles in Jerusalem—to live until Jesus came back. (3 Nephi 28: 6-7) This Book of Mormon passage references the Bible account in John 21:20-22. That passage records Jesus asking Peter three times “Do you love me?” Jesus was ministering forgiveness and healing to Peter who had denied the Savior the night of His trial before His crucifixion. This is where Peter says, “Yes, you know I love you!”

But then Peter, unexpectedly, turns his attention to John (The Beloved) and asks Jesus, “What about *him*?” How inter

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The Three Nephites

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## No Fool Like an Old Fool



I love the desert. I was born on a ranch in the Wyoming desert. My great-grandfather homesteaded the property. When he and his bride arrived there from Pittsfield, Massachusetts, they lived in a dugout. When my parents were married they lived up the road in a cabin with dirt floors. Mom carried water from the river. I

Cont. on back page

esting that Peter was worried about what Jesus had in store for John! Jesus answers, in effect, “That is none of your business!” The Bible records:

*Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.*

*Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. (John 21: 22-23)*

I am mystified why people seem to read into that passage the idea that Jesus was telling John he would not die until Jesus returned. To me it is obvious that Jesus is simply saying “Keep your eyes on your own business!”

Nevertheless Mormonism believes John is being offered Eternal Life starting right then. Nobody believed it more than the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith.



## Disagreement

One Mormon disagreed—at least initially. The Official *History of the [Mormon] Church* says that Oliver Cowdery, who was transcribing the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith “translated” it, disagreed with Smith. Cowdery may have said, “Hold on, Boss, the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Book of John does not say that John would not die, but only that “a saying went abroad” to that affect. Smith, however, held his ground. I believe Joseph could not stand to be corrected; he was the “prophet” after all, Cowdery but a scribe.

*The History of the Church* (vol. 1, pp.35-36) (says Cowdery and Smith decided to inquire of the Lord as to whether John was promised that he would not die. So they sought a “revelation” and the Prophet received an answer which has been recorded as Section Seven of The Doctrine and Covenants (Mormon Scripture). No surprise, Section Seven has John the Beloved—in his own words— saying that he asked Jesus for “power over death” and Jesus granted his request.

*AND the Lord said unto me: John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you shall ask what you will, it shall be*

*granted unto you.*

*2 And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee.*

*3 And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people.*

*4 And for this cause the Lord said unto Peter: If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? For he desired of me that he might bring souls unto me, but thou desiredst that thou mightest*

*speedily come unto me in my kingdom. (Doctrine and Covenants 7:1-4)*

But wait! That isn’t all. Somehow, somewhere—we are not told how—**Joseph actually comes up with a piece of parchment that has survived**

**with the Apostle John’s own handwriting on it!** Yes, folks, in Doctrine and Covenants Seven, the official heading to the Section says:

*The revelation is a translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself.*

This claim is also affirmed in the *History of the Church*. **If this were true, that little square of paper would be the most unique architectural find in the history of the world.** No scrap of any Christian artifact dates to the actual lifetime of the apostles, *and certainly not an autograph!*

But none of this is needed to prove that neither John nor the (fictitious) Three Nephites were given this gift of eternal life. Just finish reading the passage in John 21:

*Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die... Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?”*

## Fruit

Every Mormon that I know believes there three Nephite men wander the highways and byways of the world, encountering people and doing good. (They also believe

the Apostle John roams the earth) If you want a fun (but sad) read, just go the Internet and google “Three Nephite Sightings.”

## Baptism for the Dead Three Heavens

These next two doctrines come from the same passage of Scripture—Chapter 15 of the Book of First Corinthians. In the previous chapter of that book, Paul has addressed errors developing with in the Church at Corinth (in what is now Greece). The controversies considered teaching about the Gift of Tongues and other spiritual gifts, as well as the role of women in worship services.

In chapter fifteen, the Apostle turns his attention to what, apparently, was an erroneous teaching about bodily resurrection. We know that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection and apparently some of the new Christians brought that error with them. He begins his teaching with this statement:

*Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? (I Cor. 15:12)*

**For the rest of the chapter he addresses this subject: bodily resurrection for human beings. And his point is that whoever might be saying that there is no bodily resurrection is wrong.**

He makes his argument based on the fact—and he assumes this fact to be true for all Christians—that Jesus resurrected from the dead. They all believe that, he assumes, and if they don’t, he says their faith is in vain and their sins have not been forgiven. (v. 17) The resurrection of Christ is absolutely central to the Christian Gospel.

**Keep in mind that this entire chapter is about resurrection:** Are humans resurrected and what is the nature of that resurrected human? If you keep that in mind, you will not be tempted to make the chapter about something else.

Paul makes a rousing defense of the idea that humans are resurrected. However, during this defense he makes an obscure statement:

*Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? (v. 29)*

Bear in mind that Paul writes nothing



about who the so-called baptizers for the dead are. He does not (nor does any other biblical writer) mention this subject again. We have no way on knowing why he said it, other than to back up his position that it is foolish for Christians to doubt the resurrection.

### The Way of Error

The mistake Mormonism makes is to assume that they can extrapolate something



from his sentence that means much more than the sentence itself. To make that mistake is to take the statement out of context. Context is of major importance. More error has been introduced through out-of-context quotations than probably any other act of interpretation. This leads to *snake handling!*” By that I mean that out-of-context “proofs” can lead to *anything!* In fact, I have come to believe there is no doctrine so stupid or foolish that somebody won’t try to defend it.

Using snake handling for purposes of comparison, we read Mark 16:17-18:

*And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

This passage should be read just as it is written. It is true. Believers will, indeed—miraculously—cast our demons, speak in tongues, survive taking up serpents and drinking poison, and heal the sick. **However the passage does not direct believers to go about picking up serpents nor drinking poison to demonstrate their**

**faith.** It just says that those things *will happen*, and when they do, they are a sign of faith.

Paul for example, was shipwrecked. After he washed up on the island of Melita, was bitten by a poisonous snake. A viper came out of a bundle of sticks and bit him:

*And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. (Acts 28:5)*

Mark 16 and Acts 28 are the only references to this idea of being bitten by a snake and recovering. There certainly is not enough information in those passages to make handling snakes a practice of faith. Likewise to make a doctrine of baptism for the dead from I Cor. 15 is equally ludicrous.

(Don’t make the mistake of concluding that praying for the sick (faith healing) should be dismissed for the same reasons. The biblical admonition to pray for the sick and expect healing is found *throughout* the Bible. It is a major teaching found repeatedly in scripture.

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### Three Heavens

Mormonism also makes First Corinthians, chapter fifteen say that there are three heavens. Mormonism tries to get this from verse 40:

*There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.*

Mormonism says this passage refers to three levels of heaven to which men and women go based on the lives they live on this earth. But, to prove that, they will have to come up with a lot more proof than Chapter fifteen of First Corinthians.

The real secret to Bible Interpretation is to *read the whole passage in context.* (The second secret is to then pit that passage against all other Bible references to the subject).

Paul, after chastising his audience for failure to believe in resurrection furthers the discussion by writing: “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (v. 35) He then answers his own question by saying that the resurrected body is far different than the earthly body. It is as different as the sun is from the moon:

*[The earthly body] is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in*

*dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. (vv. 42-44)*

Further, he says that:

*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption....So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (50, 54)*

There is nothing in Chapter fifteen to indicate that we should Baptize for the dead or expect to find various levels of heaven for the believers. Those two ideas contradict all that Scripture has to say about resurrection and heaven.

### Now, Apply What

#### You Have Learned

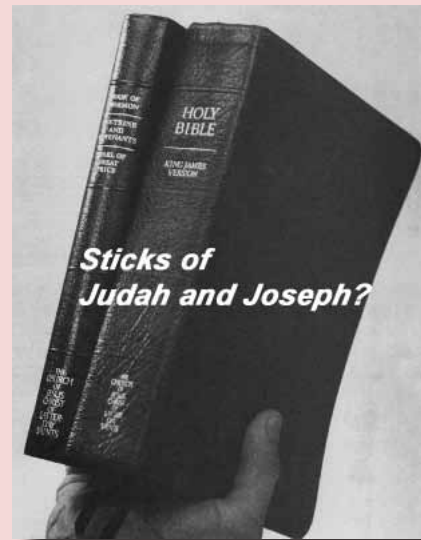
**(The Stick of Judah and the Stick of Joseph)** If you go online to scriptures.lds.org (the official Mormon website) and view Ezekiel Chapter 37 via the site’s online Bible, you will find a heading at the beginning of the chapter which says:

*The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapter 37:*

*Israel shall inherit the land in the resurrection—The stick of Judah (Bible) and the stick of Joseph (Book of Mormon) become one in the Lord’s hand...*

Mormon scholars want us to believe that the Bible prophesies the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. To make their point, they quote from Ezekiel 37:

*The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel thy companions: then take another stick,*



## My Old Homestead



I was born here, but not in the white house—in the basement. In 1942 it was a “basement house.” The roof of our home was where the red line is in the picture on the left. Later residents added the frame structure on top of the basement house. I took this picture in 1985. Since then this entire structure has been torn down and a very lovely home replaces it. Those of you who read my novel *Blood Atonement* are familiar with this ranch.

### Old Fool...

Remember our drinking pail with a dipper hanging on it. After the sand settled out of the water, people used the communal dipper to drink.

Recently my daughter, Erin, sent me a quotation from *My Antonia* by Willa Cather. Ms. Cather wrote that no one who has not grown up in the Prairie West could know anything about it. She said it was kind of a freemasonry. (*Careful, now, she was not making a religious comment, just asserting “You had to have been there”!*) I agree that my childhood in rural Wyoming has informed every aspect of my life.

A few years ago I bought an ATV (pictured on the front of this newsletter). Since then I have been roaming the Owyhee Desert south of Boise. It is impossible to describe the beauty and wonder of being alone in the desert.

At any rate (and here is where the “old fool” part comes in) next spring I will begin my 70th year. God has been so good to me. I am healthy (but at my age that could change quick). So, I have set my mind that after the Spring snow melts, I will ride my ATV (alone) from Boise to Las Vegas, through the amazing Great Basin Desert. I once wrote that you could set off a thousand A-Bombs out there and not knock over a man-made structure. Nothin’ out there but critters—human and animal.

I was surprised that Margaretta didn’t roll her eyes at me when I told her. She seemed sorta intrigued by the idea. Maybe she is thinking of the month of peace she will have while I’m gone. ■



### Mormon Misinterpretation...

and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. (Ezek. 37:15-17)

Mormons claim the word *stick* in this passage means *book*! (Actually they say it means *scroll*.) They argue that Old Testament books, like Ezekiel, were written on parchment and then rolled up on sticks. Now, that does not seem too unreasonable. That could be what is meant here, if that interpretation fits with the context and with the rest of scripture.”

So, what is the first thing we should do if we encounter an odd doctrinal challenge like this one?

### Context

This one is easy. All you have to do to understand what the word *stick* means here is to read the next couple of verses:

...And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. **And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these?** Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the **tribes of Israel** his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. (Ezk: 37:17-19)

The tribes of Judah and Israel had been divided after King Solomon died. They warred with each other. God, through Ezekiel, promises that He has a plan of unification to bring the two tribes back together. **The two sticks in one hand is a prophecy about the reuniting of the Jews!**

In the very next few verses, Ezekiel explains the prophecy:

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, **I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:**

And **I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.** (Ezek: 37: 21-22)

This Prophecy was fulfilled on May 14, 1948; just three years after the Jews were liberated from the Holocaust! ■

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