

"He saw the heavens open...and...he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven...[who] stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read. And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord." 1 Nephi 1:8-9, 11-12

Who among us has not longed to have the heavens open and the blessings of revelation flow unto us mediated by the Spirit of the Lord? And who among us has not desired to know what Lehi or Nephi or Alma or Joseph Smith knew? Mighty and pure were the truths that they taught and the doctrines they knew—indeed the heavens were opened to them and revelations poured forth like a flood (Malachi 3:10). What would it require for any one of us to have such an experience? The process begins when we open the scriptures to explore the heaven revealed words of the prophets.

Of the heavenly treasures bestowed upon God's children, one of the greatest is Joseph Smith's inspired translation. Herein was the work of scripture being enhanced by a living prophet who had seen into the heavens. Soon after the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830 the Lord commanded Joseph to begin this monumental work. The Lord promised:

Behold, I say unto you, it shall not be given unto you to know any further...until the [Scriptures] be translated, and in it all these things shall be made known. Wherefore I give unto you that ye may now translate it, that ye may be prepared for the things to come. D&C 45:60-61

This inspired translation was mostly complete by 1833. However, the church members of Joseph's day neglected to support the cause of bringing forth new scripture, which hindered these new scriptures from being published by the LDS church until 1979, and even then *only* one-third of Joseph's inspired revisions were included.¹ Yet, even in our day, these powerful scriptural revelations sit quietly tucked away in the back of our Bibles² or unnoticed in a plethora of footnotes.³

Like the prophets of God we can begin to have the heavens opened unto us as we more carefully explore and ponder the inspired words of the Joseph Smith Translation (JST). Let us take as one example a passage from Matthew concerning John the Baptist's interaction with the Pharisees and Sadducees as he baptized at the Jordan. We will compare in parallel columns Joseph Smith's inspired version against the King James Version translation (KJV). This will give us a taste of the marvelous doctrines available to any who will but seek them in these new scriptures.

All of Joseph Smith's inspired revisions are marked in **bold**. Portions of the KJV *not* found in the JST are marked in italics.

JST Matthew 3:33-40 ⁴	KJV Matthew 3:7-12
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<p>33 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 34 Why is it that ye receive not the preaching of him whom God hath sent? If ye receive not this in your hearts, ye receive not me; and if ye receive not me, ye receive not him of whom I am sent to bear record; and for your sins ye have no cloak.</p> <p>35 Repent, therefore, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance;</p> <p>36 And think not to say within yourselves, We are the children of Abraham, and we only have power to bring seed unto our father Abraham; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children into Abraham.</p> <p>37 And now, also, the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire.</p> <p>38 I indeed baptize you with water, upon your repentance; and when he of whom I bear record cometh, who is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, (or whose place I am not able to fill,) as I said, I indeed baptize you before he cometh, that when he cometh he may baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire.</p> <p>39 And it is he of whom I shall bear record, whose fan shall be in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but in the fullness of his own time will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.</p> <p>40 Thus came John, preaching and baptizing in the river of Jordan; bearing record, that he who was coming after him had power to baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire.</p>	<p>7 ¶ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?</p> <p>8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:</p> <p>9 And think not to say within yourselves, We <i>have</i> Abraham <i>to</i> our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children <i>unto</i> Abraham.</p> <p>10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.</p> <p>11 I indeed baptize you with water <i>unto</i> repentance: <i>but</i> he that cometh <i>after me</i> is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he <i>shall</i> baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and <i>with</i> fire:</p> <p>12 Whose fan <i>is</i> in his hand, and he will <i>throughly</i> purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but <i>he</i> will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.</p>
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Commentary

There is much more that the Joseph Smith translation has to offer than we may have first imagined. Additionally the red highlighted text, in contrast to a simple black text format, clearly emphasizes how many changes there truly are between the KJV and the JST. Let us carefully explore some of these textual differences verse by verse.

JST Matthew 3:33

Though this is not of any doctrinal significance, Joseph Smith included an exclamation (!) point after the word "vipers" to highlight the intensity of John the Baptist's rebuke to impenitent Jews.

JST Matthew 3:34

Now here we have a pearl of great price! Words of the prophet John the Baptist which were not transmitted across the ages have now been revealed anew in our day. His words, only found in the Joseph Smith's Inspired Translation, are truly a profound expression of three key doctrines:

1. John the Baptist was the Elias (forerunner) for Jesus Christ, preparing the hearts of the people to receive the greater which is to come.
2. Those who reject the servants of the Lord (the forerunners who come beforehand proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is at hand and that all must repent to enter in) will not accept the Lord himself when He comes.
3. The Atonement of Christ cannot cover the sins of those who do not accept Him.

What is so beautiful here about John the Baptist's language is the use of the term "cloak." The term "cloak" is often used to refer to a "loose outer garment" or "something that conceals."⁵ The Atonement of Jesus Christ does just that, it covers us like a cloak or garment of light and conceals all of our sins and iniquities against the justice of God so that we are radiant and pure before the Lord as we enter into His Kingdom. Significantly, the English word "atonement" is translated from the Hebrew word *kefar*, which is etymologically rooted to the English word "cover," which is similar in meaning to cloak. Notice the similarity in pronunciation between the Hebrew *kefar* and English "cover." It is also significant that the emblems of the Atonement are blessed and administered unto us each week in dedicated chapels, which spiritually function as cloaks. Not surprisingly we discover that the word "chapel" comes from the Late Latin word *cappa* which means "cloak."⁶

So what John the Baptist is saying to the Pharisees and Sadducees, a conversation entirely absent in the KJV, is that those who reject him will also reject the Savior. And those who reject the Savior will have nowhere to hide, nothing to cover them in the day of judgment as they cry out "to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us"⁷ (Luke 23:30).

JST Matthew 3:35

In this verse, the inspired version adds "repent" to the beginning of the verse, which makes for a stronger connection between John's statements that the wicked have no covering and their need to call upon the Lord for spiritual safety. Without the introductory "repent" the strength of the message is muted, as we find in our current KJV.

JST Matthew 3:36

The inspired changes to these verses are subtle yet are profoundly significant. In the JST version the Pharisees and Sadducees say to themselves that they are the ones that raise up seed unto (or on behalf of) Abraham. This statement entirely leaves out of the Abrahamic covenants any who are not of the literal seed of Abraham. Yet, John counters that prideful and false notion – that only the literal seed of Abraham are those who are of covenant people – by testifying that God can raise up posterity *into* Abraham with stones. The "into" of this verse means "adopted." In other words, John testifies that all of those who accept Christ will be adopted *into* Abraham, *into* the family of Abraham, *into* the Abrahamic covenants and *into* the Kingdom of the Lord. Unfortunately, the Pharisees and Sadducees had trusted in their genealogy instead of the power of repentance and the atonement of Christ; the Kingdom will not be comprised just of those who are of the literal seed, as they erroneously assumed. Thus the JST translation of this verse further reinforces the doctrine of adoption, thus casting the gospel net to the four corners of the earth instead of simply to those who are blood lineage.

JST Matthew 3:37

The JST translation simply highlights a tense change and is not of any major doctrinal significance.

JST Matthew 3:38

In this verse the inspired translation doctrinally clarifies the purpose and sequence of repentance and baptism. The KJV translation makes it appear that an individual is baptized *and then* repents. Instead, as the JST correct, baptism is the sign of repentance.

Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you, which doth bind you

down to destruction, yea, come and go forth, and show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism. Alma 7:15

Thus the JST correctly transmits the doctrine of repentance and baptism in the saying, “I indeed baptize you with water, *upon your repentance.*”

Additionally, the JST of this verse further witnesses of John’s preparatory purpose to baptize souls so that they might receive the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost from Jesus Christ. The KJV version does not plainly manifest this aspect of John the Baptist’s mission.

JST Matthew 3:39

In addition to emphasizing John’s mission to bear witness of the Savior, there is one key point that this JST verse captures concerning the wicked. The KJV does indicate that the wicked will burn, but the JST indicates a time period, i.e. in the fullness of the Lord’s own time.

JST Matthew 3:40

This verse is entirely absent in our current KJV translation of the Bible. Yet, how simple, yet pure and profound it is in doctrine and how well it synthesizes and summarizes the main ideas of all the previous verses.

The Treasures of Heaven

How richly blessed we are with the additional scripture received by one who had gazed into the heavens and contemplated the deep things of God. How good God has been to us to bring these things forth in our time. And how much more will be our blessing when we diligently search that which we already have before us, for it is then that we will be prepared to receive more.

He saw the heavens open...and...he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven...[who] stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read. And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. 1 Nephi 1:8-9, 11-12

May we see into heaven through the eyes of the prophets. And may we be like Lehi who followed the Lord’s command to open the scriptures and read. By availing ourselves of the Joseph Smith Translation and other scriptures we will be filled with the Spirit of the Lord and proclaim with Lehi:

Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth. 1 Nephi 1:14

1. Robert J. Matthews, *A Bible! A Bible!* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1990), p. 91. [?](#)
2. Portions of the Joseph Smith Translation are found on page 797 of the Appendix in the LDS King James Version printing of the Bible. [?](#)
3. These footnotes have a small abbreviation that read “JST”. [?](#)
4. *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: An Inspired Revision of the Authorized Version by Joseph Smith, Junior.* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1991). [?](#)
5. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2001. See “cloak”. [?](#)
6. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2001. See “chapel”. [?](#)
7. See also 1 Nephi 12:9-10, “And the mean man boweth not down, and the great man humbleth himself not,

therefore, forgive him not. O ye wicked ones, enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for the fear of the Lord and the glory of his majesty shall smite thee.” [?](#)