**Latter Day Revelation**

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus prayed to His Father on behalf of His disciples, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” (John 17:17) As a member of the Godhead, Jesus could truthfully say, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48).

As disciples of Jesus, determining what constitutes the body of words and sayings of Jesus is a task of paramount importance. Considering I will one day be judged according to His words, I must know where to go to find out what His teachings are.

A man named Joseph Smith, author of the Book of Mormon, would have us believe that he has been the recipient of revelations from Jesus Christ as recently as 1844 and that members of the religious organization he founded continue to be guided by divine inspiration. If his claims are true, the words of Jesus are contained, not only in the New Testament, but also in the Book of Mormon, Doctrines and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price.

What does the New Testament teach about divine revelation and the teachings of Christ? Should we be looking for latter day revelation? What constitutes the words of Jesus?

**Jesus’ teaching.** He taught and performed miracles among the Jewish people for about three and a half years, but we weren’t there to hear Him. He never wrote a book, so we can’t read His writings. Jesus had other plans for communicating His teachings to us.

**Jesus chose apostles to be His ambassadors.** These men traveled with Jesus, heard Him teach, saw His miracles and were witnesses of His resurrection from the dead. But the gospel message was too important to rely on the memories of fallible men. Jesus told His apostles, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you” (John 16:12-15).

**Jesus revealed His will through prophets.**  Ephesians 4:7-8 tells us that Christ gave us gifts. Verses 11-12 say, “He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” But how did these prophets receive their divine inspiration? Acts 8 provides a clear and definitive answer to this question.

Philip was inspired and could perform miracles, but he was not an apostle. Acts 8 tells us he had preached the gospel and performed miracles in Samaria and that many believed and were baptized into Christ. Verse 16 makes it plain that baptism in the name of Jesus did not give these people miraculous gifts of the Spirit (including prophecy); Peter and John had to come to Samaria from Jerusalem, pray for these new converts and lay their hands on them to impart these gifts.

So two groups of people were the recipients of divine inspiration: the apostles of Jesus and Christians who obtained the gift of prophecy through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. The books of the New Testament are the writings of apostles (Matthew, John, Paul, Peter) and prophets (Mark, Luke, James, Jude). When the apostles died, no one was left to lay hands on others to impart the gift of prophecy. When the prophets of their day passed away, divine revelation ceased by the will of God.

The book of Hebrews begins by contrasting God’s communication of His will in the past (to the Fathers by the prophets) with “these last days” in which He has spoken to us by His Son. The Son has spoken through His own teaching as well as that of His inspired apostles and prophets and their writings, the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

**How do I know it is complete?** Paul told Timothy that “All Scripture is inspired (God-breathed) by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Jude verse 3 admonishes all Christians to “contend earnestly for *the faith* which was once for all handed down to the saints.” The phrase “the faith” is used 30 times in the New Testament to refer to a body of teaching. Jude is telling us that this body of knowledge has been “once for all handed down to the saints” and challenges us to “contend earnestly” for it.

Paul insisted that a man must be considered accursed if he preaches anything other than this body of teaching we have already received (Galatians 1:8-9). Anyone who claims “latter day revelation”, teaching anything other than what we have already received brings upon themselves the divine wrath of which Paul speaks. “Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.” (2 John verse 9)

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