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Revisions in the 2013 LDS Edition of the King James Bible

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On Friday, March 1, 2013, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced a new English edition of the scriptures with updated study helps and stylistic improvements. It had been thirty-four years since the Church produced an improved version of the English scriptures.¹ Though such scriptural updates have occurred in the past, it is important to understand what kinds of changes were included in the recently released 2013 LDS English edition of the Bible. The purpose of this article is to describe, in general, these recent changes, and briefly list them. Since the JST changes are of greater doctrinal significance, greater focus will be given to the JST changes made in the new edition.

It takes a tremendous amount of time and skilled effort to print the scriptures accurately. In addition to proficiency, however, inspiration is still required. For example, during the printing of the 1979 English edition of the LDS version of the Bible, President Thomas S. Monson (a former printer), told of one fortunate visit to the Cambridge printing press in England: “As I walked along the press line, pausing briefly at the delivery end of each press, I removed from one a printed sheet. My eyes observed a horizontal rule that

had been misplaced, making the text confusing to the reader. The press was stopped. The error was corrected. I paused to thank my Heavenly Father.”² President Monson was ever mindful of the Spirit that permeated the work: “I can’t say enough about the seemingly countless people who gave part of their lives to this project. But we should never forget the great and powerful source of inspiration that has overseen the entire project—the Spirit of the Lord.”³

In the October 1982 general conference, President Boyd K. Packer described the importance of the work done to produce an LDS edition of the standard works:

As the generations roll on, this [new edition of the scriptures] will be regarded, in the perspective of history, as the crowning achievement in the administration of President Spencer W. Kimball. . . . 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.⁴

As Elder Packer further observed, “Everything that could be done has been done to help open the scriptures to members so that they might know the gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁵ President Monson wrote in his journal about the importance of this new LDS edition of the scriptures: “I have said in private this is one of the major contributions during my service as a General Authority.”⁶ The adjustments in the 2013 edition of the scriptures will no doubt prove to be of similar worth and value to future generations.

Approved Adjustments for the 2013 Edition of the Scriptures⁷

The printing masters (metal printing plates) created in 1979 for the LDS edition of the King James Bible have been used over the past thirty years to produce millions of printed copies. Due to “age and long use,” the quality of these masters has deteriorated to the point that new ones sporting fresh and crisp typefaces were critically needed. It was determined that if the Church would have to go to the expense and effort to create new printing masters, it would be a propitious time to update the scripture helps and make other necessary changes. After eight years of careful editing, the 2013 edition was completed and announced.⁸ More than 99 percent of the corrections are found in the study aids, chapter summaries, footnotes, Topical Guide,

Bible Dictionary and triple combination index. *A Summary of Approved Adjustments for the 2013 Edition of the Scriptures* can be downloaded from LDS.org. As described in that document, the following changes, corrections, and improvements were made:

- Cosmetic changes were made to improve font quality and readability.
- Archaic spellings for twenty-three King James Version words were updated in modern English.
- Several minor typographical errors in the text were corrected.
- The typeface for scriptural text was more clearly delineated from study helps.
- Grammatical changes were made in chapter headings to complete sentences, and clear up any possible doctrinal misinterpretations.
- Items in the LDS Bible Dictionary and Topical Guide were reformat- ted for easier reading.
- Bible maps were moved to the back and updated maps were provided.
- New and improved Bible photographs were added after the maps section.
- More accurate notes about specific scriptures were added.
- The Bible Chronology was moved from inside the Bible Dictionary to an appendix section.
- The Harmony of the Gospels was also moved from the Bible Dictionary to the appendix.

Joseph Smith Translation Additions⁹

By far the most doctrinally significant changes in the Bible are found in the expanded JST appendix. The typeface has been enlarged for easier reading and a new introduction has been written for the JST appendix; numerous new JST entries have been added or revised; the title of this section is now “Selections from the Joseph Smith Translation.” This is a significant change. Some readers of the LDS edition of the Bible may have assumed that the 1979 “Joseph Smith Translation” section, and the other JST footnotes, contained every one of the inspired revisions the Prophet Joseph Smith made to the Bible; however, from June 1830 to July 1833, Joseph Smith was inspired to revise 3,410 verses in the Bible, of which only 1,111 (by my count) are noted in the LDS edition (about 33 percent). By changing the title of this section to read “Selections from the Joseph Smith Translation,” students of the scriptures will know that there are other JST changes to search out and savor. Just as Moses was informed, a latter-day prophet would be raised up to

restore the words Moses had written: “And now, Moses, my son, I will speak unto thee concerning this earth upon which thou standest; and thou shalt write the things which I shall speak. And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write, behold, *I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again among the children of men—among as many as shall believe*” (Moses 1:40–41; emphasis added).

The brief 1979 introduction to the JST appendix (“Excerpts Too Lengthy for Inclusion in Footnotes”) has now been expanded to read “Following are excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible too lengthy for inclusion in the footnotes. For an explanation of this work, see ‘Joseph Smith Translation (JST)’ in the Bible Dictionary. Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible has connections with or is mentioned in several sections of the Doctrine and Covenants (see sections 37, 45, 73, 76, 77, 86, 91 and 132). Also, the Book of Moses and Joseph Smith—Matthew are excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation.” Not all 3,410 changed verses in the JST which were made by the Prophet Joseph Smith could be included in the LDS edition, but several more doctrinally significant JST changes have now been added or revised in the new 2013 JST appendix.

Genesis 1–6

One of the new JST additions is “JST, Genesis 1:1–8:18,” which reads “This text of the Bible was restored by Joseph Smith and is published in the Pearl of Great Price as Selections from the Book of Moses.” This is an important addition. How many Latter-day Saints have studied the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, never realizing that Moses 1–8 is the JST version of Genesis 1:1 thru 6:13? How many readers looked for JST changes in the footnotes of those Genesis chapters? Because we already had the entire Joseph Smith Translation version of Genesis 1:1 through 6:13 as the Book of Moses, there were no JST footnotes in the 1979 text for Genesis 1:1 through 6:18.

Besides the twelve new JST appendix entries, there are also forty-two new JST footnotes in the Bible that refer to the “Selections from the Joseph Smith Translation” appendix, and forty-four new JST footnotes containing JST quotations. Thus, those reading the Old and New Testaments with the 2013 edition will now have eighty-six new JST notes to ponder and contemplate. Following are a few of the JST changes in the 2013 edition.

Genesis 6:6–7

A new JST footnote has been added to Genesis 6:6–7, footnotes *6a* and *7b*. In the KJV the text disturbingly reads “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. . . . And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth . . . for it repenteth me that I have made them.” This makes it sound as if God regretted creating man and felt a need to repent for committing this “mistake” by destroying mankind in the Flood. These verses (and many like them) in the past have raised a variety of questions about God’s omniscience (or lack of it), his supposed need to repent and the possibility of him making mistakes he regrets. In Genesis 6:6, the new JST footnote deletes the phrase “The Heb. Root [for repented] means ‘to be sorry,’ ‘moved to pity,’ ‘have compassion’” and replaces it with a JST footnote which reads “And it repented *Noah*, and *his heart was pained*, that *the Lord* had made man” In verse 7, the JST changes the text to read “For it repenteth *Noah* that I have *created* them.” There are similar verses in the Old Testament that make God sound weak or in need of repentance. Almost every one of these verses is changed in the JST, and now the JST changes in Genesis 6:6–7 join with other JST footnotes to help clarify that it was man, not God, who repented.¹⁰ Joseph Smith taught that one of the three things necessary in order to exercise faith in God is a “correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes.”¹¹ The JST presents a correct understanding of God’s true nature and character, making it possible for us to develop great faith in him.

Genesis 9:10–14

A new JST entry for Genesis 9:10–14 explains that the covenant God made with Enoch was now (after the Flood) renewed with Noah and his family—changing “Genesis 9:10–14” to “JST, Genesis 9:10–15,” and adding verse 15, which reads “And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I *will* establish my covenant with you, *which I made unto your father Enoch, concerning your seed after you*” (emphasis added).

Genesis 17:7

When Abraham learns he and Sarah are to have a son, the text in Genesis 17:7 sounds as if he doubted it could ever be possible: “Then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?” The

1979 edition has a footnote (17:17a) indicating that the word “laughed” was changed in the JST to read “rejoiced.” However, the 2013 JST appendix now adds the other JST changes made in that same verse. The new JST entry for Genesis 17:23 reads: “Then Abraham fell on his face and *rejoiced*, and said in his heart, *There* shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old, and Sarah that is ninety years old *shall bear*.” What originally sounded like doubting is replaced with more rejoicing.

2 Chronicles 18:20

Another new JST footnote was added at 2 Chronicles 18:20, which reads “Then there came out a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him.” The new JST footnote 20a adds that it was a “lying spirit.”

Ezekiel 14:9

Ezekiel 14:9 reads “And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet . . .” This is doctrinally incorrect for several reasons. The new JST footnote 9a adds an important negation: “I the Lord have *not* deceived that prophet.”

Matthew 2:19

Matthew 2:19 says that an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, but in the new JST footnote JST Matthew 3:19, it is clarified that the angel appeared to Joseph in a *vision*. Rather than have knowledge communicated to Joseph in a dream (as the KJV indicates), Joseph experienced literal visions, sent from God, guiding him and helping him protect his family. Joseph learned in an open vision from an angel to take the Christ child and flee to Egypt for safety, not merely a dream.

Matthew 7:23

The Lord closes the Sermon on the Mount with a warning that those who claim to be his, but who have failed to do God’s will, will be rejected with the thundering phrase “I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). Of course, this sort of response does not match what we know about the Lord from other scriptures. God knows everyone of us better than we know ourselves, especially after his atoning sacrifice on our behalf

wherein he paid for our sins and failings. The new JST footnote reflects the real reason some will be rejected: “And then will I say, *Ye never knew me . . .*”

Matthew 16:24–25

In the 1979 edition, Matthew 16:24–25 has two JST footnotes. The first, JST Matthew 16:26*d*, states, “*And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments*” (emphasis added). Right below it is a second JST note, which refers the reader to the appendix. In the 2013 edition, this entry in the JST appendix has been expanded to include verses 25 and 26. No new JST word changes are made, but the JST changes are now listed together in the appendix (as JST, Matthew 16:25–29).

Mark 14:10

Another interesting footnote was added in Mark 14:10 that explains why Judas turned against the Savior and betrayed him. The KJV reads “And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.” The new JST footnote 10*a* adds “to betray *Jesus* unto them; *for he turned away from him, and was offended because of his words.*” What an insightful change to have included!

John 8:10–11

The story of the woman taken in adultery and thrown at the Savior’s feet to be judged has a touching JST change added to the 2013 edition. After dismissing the vile scribes and Pharisees (who were convicted one by one, by their own guilty conscience), the Savior stood and spoke to this unfortunate woman: “Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:10–11). The KJV makes this passage sound like the Savior was both forgiving her and encouraging her to repent and change. The JST adds one more interesting insight about what happened next, which is not found in any other Bible: “*And the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name.*” This is not a doctrinal change in the text, but the restoration of a historical gem that had been lost from this vignette. Many scholars doubt this story was even real, because it is missing from early New Testament manuscripts. However, this JST change reassures us that the story not only occurred, but that it also had an inspiring ending.

In just a few private moments with a sinful child of God, the Spirit was felt, a heart was changed, and a soul was saved. This particular JST change gives us hope for similar merciful moments in our own lives.

Conclusion

Truly there is much to learn by studying the revisions and refreshing updates in the 2013 English edition of the LDS scriptures, especially with the new JST additions. The Brethren take very seriously the Lord's charge to "preserve" the scriptures "in safety" (see D&C 42:56)—meaning physical safety as well as doctrinal and content safety. Each new version of the LDS scriptures continues to preserve the content, doctrine, and meaning of the scriptures, and makes the words of the Lord and his prophets more understandable. As the Prophet Joseph Smith indicated, "He who reads it [the Bible] oftenest will like it best."¹² The same can be said of the revisions made in the 2013 LDS edition of the scriptures. Those who study them most carefully will be blessed with additional insight and enlightenment about the meaning of the biblical text. **RE**

Notes

1. 1979 for the LDS version of the King James Bible, and 1981 for the LDS triple combination containing the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Come, Learn of Me," *Ensign*, December 1985, 48.
3. Thomas S. Monson in Bruce T. Harper, "The Church Publishes a New Triple Combination," *Ensign*, October 1981, 10.
4. Boyd K. Packer, "Scriptures," *Ensign*, November 1982, 52.
5. Boyd K. Packer, "New Publications of the Standard Works," Church Educational System filmstrip presentation. His complete quotation reads "The Latter-day Saint publication of the King James Version of the Bible and the new triple combination, with all their helps, are of monumental importance to all members of the Church. Everything that could be done has been done to help open the scriptures to members so that they might know the gospel of Jesus Christ. We hope to open a door and introduce to you a library of revelation and inspiration and light. One day, on your own, as an individual, you must enter there and study by yourself. Today we can but set the door ajar. Now, we hope that you have a great desire to enter into this library alone, and in quiet study and prayer receive the kind of revelation that comes when you earn it, when you're reading the scriptures."
6. Michael De Groot, Lynn Arave, and Scott Taylor, "Robert J. Matthews, Joseph Smith Translation Expert, Dies," *Deseret News*, August 31, 2009.
7. A twelve-page "Summary of Approved Adjustments for the 2013 Edition of the Scriptures" can be obtained at <http://www.lds.org/scriptures/adjustments?lang=eng>. For an expanded version of this summary of Approved Adjustments, see <http://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/scriptures/detailed-summary-of-approved-adjustments.pdf>.
8. To learn more about the specific changes regarding the 1981 edition, see Bruce T. Harper, "The Church Publishes a New Triple Combination," *Ensign*, October 1981, 8–19.

9. For more information about the history and translation of the JST, see Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), and Kent P. Jackson, *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005).

10. Other similar corrections can be seen in JST footnotes for Exodus 32:12, 14; 1 Samuel 15:35; 19:9; 2 Samuel 24:16; Jeremiah 26:13, 19; Jonah 3:9–10; and others. Many who read such verses agree with Joseph Smith's observations, "There are many things in the Bible which do not, as they now stand, accord with the revelations of the Holy Ghost to me" (*History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978], 5:425), and "We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly" (*History of the Church*, 5:342).

11. *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 3:3.

12. *History of the Church*, 2:14.