

Why are there so many arguments about what's in the Bible?

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ELDER BRIAN L. RAWSON, of the Seventy, North America Central Area, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

As Christians, we appeal to the Bible to inform our decisions about how to live our lives.

We realize that our decisions determine our destiny and that our decisions that align with God's will lead to happiness and peace. We search the Scriptures for unchangeable truth — doctrine — to inform our decisions.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints love and revere the Bible as the word of God. We study it diligently, teach its timeless principles and doctrines to our children, and we rejoice in the Bible's witness of the life and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not believe the Bible, as it currently exists, to be without error. As the Bible was compiled, organized, translated and transcribed, many errors entered the text. The existence of such errors becomes apparent when one considers the numerous and often conflicting translations of the Bible in existence today.

Careful students of the Bible often are puzzled by apparent contradictions and omissions. Consequently, diverse and sometimes divisive interpretations of the same Bible passages arise.

So, what are we to do? We believe that God's pattern from biblical times has not changed and that he continues to reveal his will through his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7). We believe that the scriptural canon is open.

In addition to the Bible, Latter-day Saints revere and study the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the words of modern prophets and apostles.

All these sources of eternal truth work together to establish, clarify and testify of the plan of our heavenly Father and to bring people unto Jesus Christ.

THE REV. DUKE TUFTY, pastor, Unity Temple on the Plaza:

The 66 books of the Bible were written over a 1,300-year time period by many authors with many viewpoints.

Since that time the Bible has been tweaked, touched up, added to and deleted from to fit the viewpoints of the ruling class as well as serve the personal interest of religious authorities.

When King James oversaw the translation of his version he chose to leave out more than 500 pages that he disagreed with and added many that supported his beliefs. In regard to this, Psalm 50 comes to mind, where God says, "I will accept no bull from your house."

It is important to remember, when we read the Bible today we are reading a translation of a translation into a language that didn't exist when the original Bible was written.

Scholars agree there are more than 20,000 inconsistencies in the Bible as a result of different people with different viewpoints.

There are many ways to interpret the Bible. Some people believe every word is literally true, some people believe it is a compilation of stories that serve up a moral. The agnostic questions everything in the Bible, and the atheist disputes it. From this we end up with arguments, conflicts, even battles and wars over its contents.

Yet in all of this the Bible is not to be discounted. It is a moral compass that can serve all civilizations and with an open mind can be a source of comfort and inspiration to every person.