

Old Testament Study Guide and Survey

Moses 1 - Abraham 3



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Created by Timothy R. Berman as a companion to the Come Follow Me 2022 Old Testament Curriculum. All content is of the author's understanding and research and does not reflect any official teaching of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Old Testament Survey – Come Follow Me 2022 – Introduction

The purpose of this introduction is twofold: 1) to provide individuals with a chronological framework for the people, events, and books pertaining to the Old Testament. This includes the Book of Moses and Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price and 2) to glean key lessons for how we can increase our testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and grow closer to our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ.

Resources: [Moses 1; Abraham 3 – “This is My Work and My Glory”](#) The experience and visions of Abraham and Moses tell us that we are children of God and that God’s work is to help us gain eternal life.

Historical Background and Context

Taking its name from the Saviors parable of the *Pearl of Great Price* (Matthew 13:45-46). According to historical data, Elder Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, presided over the mission in England. He originally published the earliest known version as a *compilation of several revelations and texts of scripture by the Prophet Joseph Smith and called this collection the Pearl of Great Price.*^[i] Elder Richards said that this^[ii]:

a source of much instruction and edification to many thousands of the Saints, who will by an acquaintance with its precious contents, be more abundantly qualified to set forth and defend the principles of our Holy Faith before all men” (“The Pearl of Great Price,” *Millennial Star*, July 15, 1851, 217).

The Pearl of Great Price became a standard work, along with the Doctrine and Covenants, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by the First Presidency at the October 10, 1880, General Conference. President George Q. Cannon stated:

“I hold in my hand the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and also the book the Pearl of Great Price, which books contain revelations of God. In Kirkland, the Doctrine and Covenants in its original form, as first printed, was submitted to the officers of the Church and the members of the Church to vote upon. As there have been additions made to it by the publishing of revelations which were not contained in the original edition, it has been deemed wise to submit these books with their contents to the Conference, to see whether the Conference will vote to accept the books and their contents as from God, and binding upon us as a people and as a Church.”^[iii]

President Joseph F. Smith also stated:

“I move that we receive and accept the revelations contained in these books, as revelations from God to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to all the world.” [iv]

According to the transcripts of the 2:00 pm session on October 10, 1880, *the motion was seconded and sustained by unanimous vote of the whole Conference*. Since its acceptance as a standard work, the Pearl of Great Price was updated and presented and reaffirmed by vote on in 1890. Again in 1902 when James T. Talmage was given assignment by the First Presidency to divide the Pearl of Great Price into chapters and verses, adding titles, and eliminating some portions – that were published in later editions of the Doctrine and Covenants. This edition was voted on and reaffirmed at the October 1902 General Conference. In 1979, the Pearl of Great Price was again updated and reaffirmed as sacred scripture.[i]

Theophany of Moses and Abraham

Exodus 19 records that Moses ascended Mount Sinai. It is attested that Moses, and the nation of Israel, were at Mount Sinai for approximately 40 days. The Book of Moses, and Exodus 19, contains what is known as a *theophany*. A visible manifestation to humankind of God. The Book of Abraham also contains a theophany between Abraham and Our Heavenly Father.

While the Book of Moses focuses on the visions seen at Mount Sinai, the Book of Abraham describes the visions given to the great patriarch that differ from what we read in the Book of Moses. The unique theophany of Abraham came by way of the *Urim and Thumim, which the Lord my God had given unto me, in Ur of the Chaldees* (Abraham 3:1).

What stands out is that the entire Book of Moses and parts of the Book of Abraham give us a panoramic view of the Plan of Salvation.

Revelations of Creation, Origin of Humanity, and God’s Divine Purpose

- What is revealed in Moses 1 and Abraham 3 helps us understand several key doctrines.
- Moses 1 and Abraham 3 describes the origins of Humanity and the creation of our earth
- Moses 1:1-10, 37-39; Abraham 3:22-26 provides us with insight into our divine destiny
- Moses 1:12-23 provides us with insight in our ability to resist Satan’s influence and temptations

- Abraham 3:22-29 describes mortality as our opportunity to grow and follow Christ and all that He commands

Therefore, this study guide will help you navigate your own personal journey through this week *Come Follow Me – Old Testament* study. Our journey begins with Moses 1 and Abraham 3.

Reading Schedule for this Week:

- December 27 | Introduction to the Pearl of Great Price; Moses 1:1-5; Abraham 1:1-5
- December 28 | Moses 1:6-10; Abraham 1:6-10
- December 29 | Moses 1:11-15; Abraham 1:11-15
- December 30 | Moses 1:16-20; Abraham 1:16-20
- December 31 | Moses 1:21-25; Abraham 1:21-25
- January 1 | Moses 1:26-32; Abraham 1:26-28
- January 2 | Moses 1:33-42

God Revealed Himself to Moses – Moses 1 a Prologue to Genesis

According to Moses 1:1 – we read that “*Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain.*” The first known theophany is where Moses encounters the burning bush (Exodus 3 – 4:17). The question arises as to what transpired on this mountain. E. Douglas Clark (see the resources link above) mentions that there are several key considerations of what happened:

1. Moses’ Theophany as an Ascension – namely he was *caught up* rather than having climbed up the mountain. It is like other theophanies that describe a type of ascension. These theophanies appear to relate that an individual had experienced some form of ascension from the earthly realm to a more heavenly realm to speak directly with God.
2. Moses was transfigured – citing the Joseph Smith account (Moses 1:2) Moses was transfigured (Moses 1:11)
3. The Timing of Moses’ Theophany – one of the questions raised is when did this theophany of Moses occur. Did it occur at the burning bush? When Moses and the Israelites camped at Mount Sinai? According to Clark, ancient sources speak to multiple ascensions and theophanies of Moses. One that he mentions is included in the Book of Jubilees.
4. A Type of Messiah – We learn that Moses is *in the similitude of the Only Begotten* (Moses 1:6).
5. Confrontation of Satan – Moses is confronted by Satan. This appears, according to Clark, consistent with *rabbinic texts, after Moses receives the Torah...*

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6. Vision of All things – Once Moses resisted Satan’s temptation, he saw all things.
 7. Vision of All Generations – not only did Moses see all things, he also saw all the generations of the Earth (from Adam to the end of the Age and Christ’s second coming).
 8. Worlds without Number – My personal favorite is that since the mid-1990’s there are consistently new planetary and solar system discoveries. None of these were understood or available at the time of Joseph Smith – yet it is recorded in sacred records that our Heavenly Father created numerous worlds without end. Not only this, but we also learn that as one world ends, others are coming into existence (Moses 1:38).
 9. Contemplating the Divine Creator and His Grand Purpose – this is the most significant revealed truth of all of scripture – God’s plan and purpose for all of humanity is revealed unto Moses.
 10. Looking Ahead to the Last Days – again, Moses was shown all of the history of this earth and recorded that history.

One key understanding here is that we learn that much of what is recorded in Moses 1 is verified through other ancient documents that have resurfaced concerning Moses and the Prologue of Moses Chapter One. These other texts were not available the time Joseph Smith had written down what our Heavenly Father revealed unto him. This presents a great value unto us Latter-day Saints. As E. Douglas Clark says:

Moses 1 ... offers a unique contribution to the vast canon of revealed scripture. The entire absence of Moses 1 from the version of Genesis that has come down to us, along with continuing debates about the authorship of the Pentateuch, certainly ear out God’s revelation to Moses that “the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write” (Moses 1:41).

Clark proceeds to quote Hugh Nibley where *we have several very ancient and significant parallels to Moses 1, which lie far beyond the reach of coincidence or daydreaming.*

God Revealed the Pre-Existence of Humanity and Showed Abraham the Stars

While Moses 1 is a prologue to the Creation account we find in Genesis 1 – Abraham 3 teaches us about the premortal existence and the creation of the stars. Their times and revolutions. From Astronomy to premortal spirits – what we discover is that all of us are spirit children of Heavenly Parents. That we are also eternal beings with varying degrees of intelligence. It is also in Abraham 3 where we begin to learn the nature of the Plan of Salvation.

Another interesting aspect of Abraham 3 is how we learn about the falling away of Satan. His rebellion (that will later cost 1/3 of the heavenly host the opportunity to obtain a mortal body and participate in the plan of salvation).

A third aspect of Abraham 3 centers on the nature of the Divine Council. Much of the time, one encounters the divine council from the various theophany accounts. For instance, Job 1 and 2 references a theophany with the divine council present – Satan being among them. Joseph Fielding McConkie writes a treatise on the *Premortal Existence, Foreordinations, and Heavenly Councils* (see resource link above). McConkie remarks how much of the apocryphal literature references the premortal existence of the soul. It was not until later Christian tradition and teachings had redacted much of the references to any premortal existence, divine council, and foreordinations. The Old Testament does contain extant and vague mentions concerning such teachings. This, of course, occurred over the years of transmission and translation. McConkie cites the *edict known as the Anathemas against Origen, promulgated by the Roman emperor Justinian* in 553 CE. Much of this is only referenced in those works that are considered *pseudepigraphal or apocryphal*.

One of my earlier studies and essays (now lost) involved the tracing of the idea and teaching of premortal existence to Pythagoras (who invented the Pythagorean Theorem). This idea is also tied into some of Plato's theories. Even Saint Augustine wrestled with the notion of preexistence. His views changed over time. Despite these changed views, Augustine did hold to the following idea and belief:

Like most ancient philosophers, Augustine thinks that the human being is a compound of body and soul and that, within this compound, the soul—conceived as both the life-giving element and the center of consciousness, perception and thought—is, or ought to be, the ruling part. The rational soul should control the sensual desires and passions; it can become wise if it turns to God, who is at the same time the Supreme Being and the Supreme Good. ... After his Platonist readings in Milan had provided him with the adequate philosophical means to think about immaterial, non-spatial reality (*Confessiones* 7.1–2; 7.16), he replaced this view ... with an ontological hierarchy in which the soul, which is mutable in time but immutable in space, occupies a middle position between God, who is totally unchangeable immaterial being (cf. MacDonald 2014), and bodies, which are subject to temporal and spatial change (*Letter* 18.2). The soul is of divine origin and even god-like (*De quantitate animae* 2–3); it is not divine itself but created by God In *De quantitate animae*, Augustine broadly argues that the “greatness” of the soul does not refer to spatial extension but to its vivifying,

perceptive, rational and contemplative powers that enable it to move close to God and are compatible with and even presuppose immateriality (esp. ib. 70–76; Brittain 2003).[ii]

Referring to authoritative works – there is the *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Pesahim 54e*[iii] where it says:

The Gemara provides sources for the notion that each of these phenomena was created before the world was. Torah was created before the world was created, as it is written: “The Lord made me as the beginning of His way, the first of His works of old” (Proverbs 8:22), which, based on the subsequent verses, is referring to the Torah. Repentance was created before the world was created, as it is written: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God,” and it is written immediately afterward: “You return man to contrition; and You say: Repent, children of man” (Psalms 90:2–3). The Garden of Eden was created before the world was created, as it is written: “And God planted the Garden of Eden in the east [mikedem]” (Genesis 2:8). The term: In the east [mikedem] is interpreted in the sense of: Before [mikodem], i.e., before the world was created. Gehenna was created before the world was created, as it is written: “For its hearth is ordained of old” (Isaiah 30:33). The hearth, i.e., Gehenna, was created before the world was created. The Throne of Glory and the Temple were created before the world was created, as it is written: “Your Throne of Glory on high from the beginning, in the place of our Sanctuary” (Jeremiah 17:12). The name of Messiah was created before the world was created, as it is written in the chapter discussing the Messiah: “May his name endure forever; his name existed before the sun” (Psalms 72:17). The name of Messiah already existed before the creation of the sun and the rest of the world. This baraita states that Gehenna was created before the world was created and not during twilight before the first Shabbat.[iv]

Here, we have the understanding, from a Jewish perspective, concerning things created and having pre-existed prior to the physical creation of earth, humanity, et al. What is interesting to note here is that the belief *repentance was created* prior to the world. This may very well hint to the revelation given to Moses and Abraham as it pertains to the plan of salvation.

Another interesting source that depicts a sense of preexistence is contained in the Syriac Second Baruch (or The Book of the Apocalypse of Baruch the Son of Neriah):

Dost you think that this is that city of which I said: "On the palms of My hands have I graven you"? 3 This building now built in your midst is not that which is revealed with Me, that which prepared beforehand here from the time when I took counsel to make Paradise, and showed Adam before he sinned, but when he transgressed the commandment it was removed from him, as also Paradise. 4 And after these things I showed it to My servant Abraham by night among the portions of the victims. 5 And again also I showed it to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed to the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. 6 And now, behold, it is preserved with Me, as Paradise. 7 Go, therefore, and do as I command you.[v]

This is known as the *Heavenly Jerusalem*. According to this, it was revealed to Adam first (before the transgression and fall), and then unto Moses, and then unto Abraham.

One further finds evidence within the *Bereishit Rabah I* (or Genesis Rabah)[vi] concerning the preexistence and creation:

The Torah is saying, "I was the artisan's tool of Hashem." In the way of the world, a king of flesh and blood who builds a castle does not do so from his own knowledge, but rather from the knowledge of an architect, and the architect does not build in order to know how to make rooms and doorways,. So too Hashem gazed into the Torah and created the world. Similarly the Torah says, "Through the reishis Hashem created [the heavens and the earth]." And reishis means Torah, as in "Hashem made me [the Torah] the beginning (rishis) of His way"[vii]

As we move further into chapter one – we find a familiar passage and commentary to that from the Babylonian Talmud:

In the beginning of God's creating..." - Six things preceded the creation of the world; some of them were created and some of them were decided to be created. The Torah and the Throne of Glory were created. How do we know the Torah was? As it says (Proverbs 8:22): "God made me at the beginning of his way." How do we know the Throne of Glory was? As it says (Psalms 93:2): "Your throne is established as of old etc." The Patriarchs, Israel, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah were decided to be created. How do we know the Patriarchs were? As it says (Hosea 9:10): "Like grapes in the wilderness etc." How do we know Israel was? As it says (Psalms 74:2): "Remember your congregation, whom you purchased from old." How do we know the Temple was? As it says (Jeremiah 17:12): "Your throne of glory, on high from the beginning etc." How do we know the name of the Messiah was? As it says (Psalms 72:17): "May his name exist

forever etc. [his name shall be Yinnon as long as the sun]." Rabbi Ahavah said in the name of Rabbi Ze'ira: Even repentance was, as it says (Psalms 90:2): "Before the mountains were birthed," and at the same time (Psalms 90:3), "You turned man to contrition etc." However, I do not know which was first--if the Torah preceded the Throne of Glory or the Throne of Glory preceded the Torah. Rabbi Abba Bar Cahana said: The Torah preceded the Throne of Glory, as it says (Proverbs 8:22): "God made me at the beginning of his way, the first of his works of old." This is before that of which it is written (Psalms 93:2): "Your throne is established as of old." [viii]

From this Jewish perspective and authoritative sources – we discover an idea of things having preexisted with God. Not only had they preexisted with God, but these were also revealed to Moses and Abraham respectively.

Turning our attention more toward this distinct doctrine of preexistence, the early Saints and the Church had its own evolution of the teachings that we benefit from today. In his article *The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830-1844*, Charles R. Harrell writes:

Perhaps no doctrine has had great impact on Latter-day Saint theology than the doctrine of preexistence, or the belief in the existence of the human spirit before its mortal birth. Fundamental concepts such as the nature of man as an eternal being, his singular relationship as the offspring of Deity and concomitant brotherhood with all mankind, the talents, privileges with which he is born into the world, and his potential godhood are all inextricably connected to the doctrine of preexistence. [ix]

Harrell continues and shares how the early saints, and even the Prophet Joseph Smith, learned this revealed truth *line upon line and precept upon precept*:

This distinctive LDS doctrine was not immediately comprehended by the early Saints in the more fully developed form in which it is understood today. Like many of the other teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, it was revealed line upon line and adapted to the Saints' understanding. Moreover, there was a natural tendency to view initial teachings on the preexistence in light of previously held beliefs until greater clarity was given to the doctrine. [x]

Therefore, Abraham 3 blesses us with the most significant and pure doctrine of Christ. Our understanding of Abraham 3 begins when we are humble to seek God's counsel to receive our

own personal revelation to the truthfulness of these teachings and doctrines. Specifically, on the nature of our preexistence, the creation, and the plan of salvation.

Questions to ponder (adapted from the Come Follow Me – Old Testament Manual):

- 1) How do you define the Pearl of Great Price to someone with little understanding or misunderstanding of the Book of Moses and Book of Abraham?
- 2) How do you contrast these two books with the rest of the Old Testament?
- 3) How do you contrast the Old Testament with the New Testament?
- 4) What value do we gain from the Book of Moses?
- 5) From the Book of Abraham?
- 6) What are the more significant manuscripts that are available for the Old Testament?
- 7) What truths were revealed to Moses?
- 8) What truths were revealed to Abraham?
- 9) What powerful influence do these visions have on your personal choices and ability to overcome life's challenges?
- 10) What specific truths do you discover in Moses 1 and Abraham 3?
- 11) How does Moses and Abraham's vision help you understand who you are?
- 12) How does Moses and Abraham's vision help you find a sense of meaning and purpose in this life?
- 13) How does Moses and Abraham's vision help you understand who our Heavenly Father wants you to become?

[i] Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Curriculum Services. (n.d.). *The Pearl of Great Price*. The Pearl of Great Price Institute Student Manual. Retrieved December 24, 2021, from

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-pearl-of-great-price-student-manual-2018/title-page?lang=eng>

[ii] Ibid

[iii] (<https://historicalgeneralconferences.weebly.com/1880-october.html>)

[iv] Ibid

[v] Kenneth W. Baldridge, “Pearl of Great Price: Contents and Publication,” in *Latter-day Saint Essentials: Readings from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. John W. Welch and Devan Jensen (Provo, UT: BYU Studies and the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2002), 70–1.

[vi] Tornau, Christian, "Saint Augustine", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = [<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/augustine/>](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/augustine/).

[vii] The Babylonian Talmud is considered authoritative, second to the Tanakh where it helps guide Jewish religious piety and life today. See: [The Babylonian Talmud - Jewish History \(chabad.org\)](http://chabad.org)

[viii] See [Pesachim 54a:1 with Rashi \(sefaria.org\)](http://sefaria.org). It is also quoted in the Babylonian Talmud Tractate *Nedarim* 39b – referencing the same seven things created before the world was (Torah, Repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of glory, and the house of the sanctuary, and the name of the Messiah).

[ix] See [The Wesley Center Online: The Book Of The Apocalypse Of Baruch The Son Of Neriah Or 2 Baruch \(nnu.edu\)](http://nnu.edu)

[x] Bereshit Rabbah is a talmudic-era midrash on the Book of Genesis. It covers most of the book (excluding genealogies and similar passages) with verse-by-verse and often word-by-word commentary. Written in Hebrew mixed with Aramaic and occasional Greek words, its style is simple and clear.

[xi] See [Bereishit Rabbah 1 \(sefaria.org\)](http://sefaria.org)

[xii] Ibid

[xiii] Harrell, Charles R. “The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830-1844.” *Brigham Young University Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, Brigham Young University, 1988, pp. 75–96,

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43041367>. See also:

[28.2HarrellTheDevelopment-c01455fa-7d63-4dc4-8ea5-1be9c1422afc.pdf \(byu.edu\)](#)

[xiv] Ibid