



Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)

Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844)

Members: 14.8 million worldwide

151 “Mormon only” temples; 18,000 Mormon chapels

INTRODUCTION

They will gladly give out free Bibles to anyone asking for one. Their TV ads are unlike most others, talking about wholesome things like teenagers helping seniors and family nights. To many, they seem like a breath of fresh air. Often they end their ads with the words, “Brought to you by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.” Surely a religion interested in such wholesome values, and one that includes the name of Jesus Christ in their name can’t be all bad. But when we begin to peel back the surface, we find a made-up religion based on lies designed to lead people away from Jesus Christ.

HISTORY

Joseph Smith, Jr. was born in Sharon, Vermont, in 1803. At age eleven his family moved to Palmyra, New York, an area imbedded with revivalism. Although his parents joined the Presbyterian Church, Joseph refused because of strife between neighboring congregations. His claim was that he was visited in a place near his home he called the Sacred Grove, by God the Father and Jesus Christ who warned him not to join any church because they were all corrupt. In 1827, Smith alleged that one night while in prayer, he was visited by the angel Moroni (shown right atop Mormon temple spire), a prophet warrior who wrote and buried golden plates that contained the true history of God. He was later granted angel status. (The gold plated angel Moroni is often seen atop Mormon temples.) Moroni told Smith he was chosen to be God’s messenger. Moroni also pointed Smith to Mount Cumorah, a hill not far from Smith’s home, where he had hidden the golden plates and other artifacts. The plates, he was told, were written in an unknown language called reformed Egyptian. Also located there were two seer stones in a pair of glasses with silver rims that would be used to interpret the foreign message. In *An Address to All Believers* author David Whiter (1887) wrote, “Joseph Smith put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver



Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.” (It should be noted that Smith was familiar with divining rods and seer stones that he used to locate buried treasure. Prior to 1827 he hired out for work as a treasure seeker. Later he was even taken to court for “glass looking.” Smith’s parents and grandfather also claimed to have experienced visions.) Smith named his glasses Urim and Thummim. (See Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8.)

In 1830 Smith published the first copy of the *Book of Mormon*. That same year he began the “Church of Christ” and called its members “Latter Day Saints” or “Mormons”. (In 1838 he renamed the church “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints”.) Smith’s new church was soon to be a religion on the move because its teachings were not well accepted by those outside his small band of followers. They moved from New York to Ohio to begin their communalistic society called American Zion. An outpost was also begun in Independence, Missouri. Their stay in Ohio lasted only a short time until Smith’s new banking company failed and left the people of the community angry and broke. Because a warrant was issued for his arrest, he moved on to Missouri. Life was no better there. The local people became angered when they heard of the Mormon’s “war of extermination” upon anyone who opposed them. In 1838, the governor of Missouri ordered the Mormons to be “driven from the state.” Soon Smith and five others were jailed and charged with treason.

Upon the invitation of the state of Illinois, they finally settled in the Mississippi River town of Nauvoo where Smith became the mayor, judge, church president and recorder of deeds. However, this soon turned ugly as the people of Nauvoo became angry with Smith’s leadership and the practice of polygamy. Soon Joseph and his brother Hiram were arrested and jailed. Finally an angry mob stormed the jail and shot Joseph Smith dead. The followers of Smith were thrown into confusion and soon split into two groups. One group led by Smith’s widow

claimed that Joseph’s son was the rightful successor. They formed the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (known as the Community of Christ since 2001). Eventually they settled in Independence, Missouri. (Independence, Missouri played an important part in Mormon history. At one time Brigham Young suggested the area as the original site of the Garden of Eden.) The other larger faction, led by Brigham Young, traveled west and finally settled in Salt Lake City, Utah. Young incorporated the church and governed both the church and the state. He was a firm proponent of polygamy which became so divisive in Utah that it led to the Utah Mormon War in 1857. Young died in 1877 and has since been followed by church presidents. (Polygamy was practiced openly among the Mormons in the last half of the 1800s. Some estimate that Joseph Smith had as many as forty wives and Brigham Young fifty-five. Today the practice has been banned although strict traditionalists still support it.)



Brigham Young

IN THEIR WORDS

One of the great deceptions of this cult is their double-speak regarding Scriptural doctrine. When one reads their literature it is easy to become convinced they are an orthodox Christian church. However, once one looks at the details a very different religion emerges.

God in Their Words

Mormons believe that God is an exalted man with a physical body. They write: *“The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.”* (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22) Straying from the truth of Scripture, the Mormons believe that the Trinity is three distinct gods. They write: *“That these three are separate individuals, physically distinct from each other, is demonstrated by the accepted records of divine dealings with man.”* (Articles of Faith by James Talmage.)

In God’s Words . . .

- What happens to God’s omnipresence when we relegate him to a human body?

Numbers 23:19 *“God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind.”*

Jeremiah 23:24 *“Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?’ declares the LORD. ‘Do not I fill heaven and earth?’”*

Jesus in Their Words

Mormons believe that Jesus was the first “spirit child” born to God from one of his many wives. Satan was the second “spirit child” from another wife, making the two “spirit brothers.” Jesus would one day become a god just as we will one day become gods. They believe that God, angels and men are all of the same species, race and family. They further believe that after Jesus’ resurrection, he made a visit to the Nephites living in the Americas. They write: *“Every person who was ever born on earth was our spiritual brother or sister in heaven. The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ, so he is literally our elder brother.”* (Gospel Principles p. 11)

“Christ thus overcame physical death. Because of his atonement, everyone born on this earth will be resurrected.” (Book of Mormon Alma 11:44)

“The birth of the Savior was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood, was begotten of his Father, we were our fathers.” (Journal of Discourses vol. 8, p. 115.)

“Jesus is the literal spirit brother of Lucifer, a creation.” (Gospel through the Ages” p. 15.)

In God’s Words . . .

- How serious is the Lord when he says he will not give his glory to another or have his image slandered by false religions like Mormonism?

2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15 *“If someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted . . . such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”*

Humanity in Their Words

The Mormons believe that all people are the spiritual offspring of the heavenly Father and Mother and each has the potential to progress in the eternities, eventually achieving eternal life. They write: *"All men and women are . . . literally the sons and daughters of Deity . . . Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal (physical) body."* (Joseph F. Smith, *The Origin of Man*)

In regard to marriage, Mormons believe that marriages may be "sealed" for eternity. They may also "seal" children to their parents as well.

The Book of Doctrine and Covenants also includes a section called the "Word of Wisdom" in which they list foods and habits that should be avoided by the Mormons. These include no alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco. Further, their "Law of Chastity" forbids adultery, premarital sex, and homosexual behavior.

In God's Words . . .

- How does the Bible argue the Mormon point that we were all born of heavenly parents?
Psalm 51:5 *"I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."*

Salvation in Their Words

Mormons believe there are many blessings that come with membership. They include living eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father, becoming gods, having their family members with them, and having everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have, that is, all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge. They accomplish this by having faith in Jesus Christ, repenting of their sins, striving to keep the commandments, and participating in ceremonial covenants called ordinances which include baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, the endowment*, and celestial marriage. They write: *"Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God-Wherefore, all things are theirs."* (*Doctrines and Covenants* 76:58-59).

* The endowment prepares Mormons to become kings, queens, priests, and priestesses in the next life. It includes a washing and anointing during which they receive a "new name" that they are not to reveal to others, and the temple garment which Mormons are expected to wear under their clothing for the remainder of their lives.

In God's Words . . .

- How does Mormonism follow the lie Satan first used in Eden?
Genesis 3:5 *"God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*
- How superior is God compared to people? Will we ever reach such superiority even in heaven?
Isaiah 55:8,9 *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'*

Life after Death in Their Words

Mormons believe there are three levels of glory. The first is the Celestial Kingdom reserved for faithful Mormons where *"then shall they be gods"* (*Doctrines and Covenants* 132:20). The second is the Terrestrial Kingdom for righteous non-Mormons. *"These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men. These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fullness."* (*Doctrines and Covenants* 76:75-76). The last level is the Telestial Kingdom reserved for the wicked and ungodly although they do not

consider this hell. *“These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers . . . who suffer the wrath of God on earth.”* (Doctrines and Covenants 76:103-104). Latter Day Saints also believe in baptism for the dead which provides post-mortem salvation for non-Mormons, and is *“immersion performed by a living person for one who is dead. This ordinance is performed in temples”* (Pearl of Great Price p. 375). (Mormons are famous for their detailed records of family names and ancestries. There is a reason for this as mentioned on their web site, *“Latter-day Saints believe families can be together after this life. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen relationships with all family members, both those who are alive and those who have died. Latter-day Saints believe that the eternal joining of families is possible through sacred sealing ceremonies that take place in temples. These temple rites may also be performed by proxy for those who have died. Consequently, for Latter-day Saints, genealogical research or family history is the essential forerunner for temple work for the dead. In Latter-day Saint belief, the dead have the choice to accept or reject the services performed for them.”*)

In God’s Words . . .

- Mormonism believes there are many kingdoms. How many places does the Lord mention in his Word? Matthew 25:34,41 *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world’ . . . Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

The Church in Their Words

According to Mormon teaching the LDS church is the only true church, the one restored by God through Joseph Smith. All other denominations *“were all wrong . . . that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt”* (Pearl of Great Price 1:19-20). Mormons claim only the LDS possesses the divine authority of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood as restored by God to Joseph Smith in 1829. (Doctrines and Covenants 13; 27:8-13; 107:1-20; PGP: Joseph Smith-History 1:68-73)

In God’s Word . . .

- Mormons insist they are not a cult but rather a Christian church. How does the Lord feel toward those who lead people to destruction like Joseph Smith and the Mormon cult all under the disguise of Christianity? 2 Peter 2:1,2 *“There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.”*

BLOOD ATONEMENT

During the governance of Brigham Young in the Utah Territory, Mormonism practiced a controversial doctrine called Blood Atonement. The view was that the atonement of Jesus was not sufficient to apply to some crimes, including apostasy, theft, fornication and adultery. To atone for these sins, the individual was to be put to death that their blood might be shed as a sacrifice. The church has since denounced this practice.

ENDOWMENT CEREMONY

The Mormon religion practices an “endowment ceremony” which prepares the individual to eventually become a king, queen, priest or priestess in the afterlife. The ceremony includes a reenactment of the story of Adam and Eve. During the ceremony they are washed and anointed and given a new name that is to be kept private. They are also provided with a set of undergarments called the “temple garment” which they are

expected to wear day and night for the rest of their lives. The ceremony includes providing a secret password they are to use when entering heaven.

MISSIONS AND TEXTS

All LDS young men between the ages of 18 and 25 years must donate two years to full-time mission work. They are expected to fund their own mission. Unmarried young women may also volunteer to serve. With more than 70,000 young missionaries in 2016 serving over four hundred missions world-wide, the LDS church is serious about proselytizing the unchurched.

The basic theology of the Mormon religion is found in four books. The first is the Bible, which Mormons believe includes errors that have crept in through the years. Joseph Smith made many corrections to the Bible. (The following three books are known as the Triple Combination.) The second book is the *Book of Mormon: an Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi* by Joseph Smith and is considered, "the most correct of any book on earth and the keystone of the religion." The book is a collection of smaller books that relate the story of a civilization that existed between 600 BC and AD 420. The story begins with a family living before the Babylonian captivity who sailed to the "promised land" in the Western Hemisphere. Upon arriving, they divide into four groups, the Nephites (a righteous people who built a temple and lived according to the laws of Moses), the Jaredites, the Mulekites, and the Lamanites (supposedly Native Americans.) The book seems to be written by Mormon, a Nephite prophet and military person. The book ends when his son, Moroni, engraves the words on golden plates and buries them. The third book is the *Doctrine and Covenants* that "contains revelations given to Joseph Smith, the prophet with some additions by his successors in the presidency of the church". The fourth book is the *Pearl of Great Price* which is "a selection from the revelations, translations, and narrations of Joseph Smith first prophet, seer, and revelator to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." This book includes a section called the *Book of Abraham* which was supposedly written by Abraham regarding his visit to Egypt. Smith claimed he translated the text from some papyri that he purchased from a traveling salesman. Although it was thought that the originals were lost in the Chicago fire, they turned up unexpectedly in a New York museum. They have since proven to be only part of an ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.

In God's Words . . .

- What do we say to the Mormons when they claim that the *Book of Mormon* is more accurate than the Holy Bible.?

2 Peter 1:19-21 *"We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

- What does God say about the Mormon teaching that the angel Moroni held the key to interpreting God's Word?

Galatians 1:8 *"Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!"*

SALT LAKE CITY TEMPLE AND TABERNACLE

The LDS church has about one hundred sixty temples around the world. Built in 1893, the Salt Lake City Temple is the largest and took nearly forty years to build. Members consider this Temple sacred and visitors must have a "Temple Recommend" to enter. It is closed to the general public. The Temple is the location where meetings are held by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Temple is considered the house of God and is used for special anointing, washing, and other ritual ceremonies.

The world famous 360 voice Mormon Tabernacle Choir performs in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, a large arena-like building also on the Temple Square property in downtown Salt Lake City. The organ in the Tabernacle boasts over 11,000 pipes and is considered one of the largest in the world.

The beautiful songs performed by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir have charmed millions as have their fabulous temples around the world. Certainly their home-spun message built around Jesus and family has been a magnet that has attracted many. The LDS however remains a cult, and should not be considered within the walls of the Christian church. Rather, it should be recognized for what it is, a man-made religion thought up by one misguided soul. These people need our prayers that they might one day have an opportunity to meet the real Jesus Christ.



DISCUSSION

1. What makes Mormonism so appealing?
2. Should young people in any church be asked to donate two years to evangelism?
3. Is polygamy forbidden in Scripture?
4. Why should a red light go on when we hear of a religion based on someone who was given special gifts?

NINE SIGNS OF A CULT

Which of these cult signs apply to the Mormons?

- Central Figure
- No Trinity
- Special Vocabulary
- Mention of Jesus
- A Different God
- Mind Control
- Another Written Authority
- Salvation by Works
- Reincarnation