

MORMONISM: THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTERDAY SAINTS

WE NEED TO TAKE THE VERY COMPLICATED theology of Mormonism and break it down to its simplest elements if we are to help you respond with knowledge and confidence to friends or loved ones caught up in one of today's most seductive non-Christian religions. We want to give you a few of the answers for the tough questions posed by Mormonism, Mormonism is no longer some quaint, quiet religious sect buried in the creases of the everlasting hills of Utah. Its presence is now felt worldwide. No doubt you have seen the rash of ads for the Mormon Church in *Reader Digest* and in *TV Guide*. Coupled with their very effective "family-oriented" public service spots on TV and radio, the Mormons are blitzing the U.S. and Canada with "name familiarity." Few homes in North America have escaped the regular visits of the Mormon missionaries. A Mormon source indicated that between the free Public Service Announcement (PSA) TV ads and their paid advertising, including regional newspaper inserts and national magazine advertising, the Mormons spent more than 100 million dollars in annual advertising costs in the 90s, and that's sure to increase in the first decade of the **2000s**. Their goal? To get multiple messages of their faith into every North American home, This would be exciting news if that message were one of true Christian substance, but, unfortunately, that is not the case.

Beyond the Façade

In order to understand Mormonism from the historic Christian perspective, we need to step beyond the highly professional façade that is presented to us in the LDS ads.

They show us only what the Mormon church wants us to see: a caring, sensitive church with Christ-centered families, all working together for the furthering of Christ's work on earth.

Some of this is true. In one sense these are committed, loving people whose conscious intent is not to be the enemies of Christ. Many Mormons sincerely believe they are serving Christ and His final message of end-times instructions.

Most Mormons are victims of a deception as clever as anything thrown at the world since the days of Adam. But, tragically, even though they may be victims, they do great harm to the true cause of Christ.

What is behind the Madison Avenue image? What is really wrong with Mormonism? Let's look at a few crucial issues.

In his letter to the Galatians the apostle Paul says:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! (Galatians 1:6-8).

For "eternally condemned" Paul uses the strongest possible

Greek term, *anathema*, which means *under the divine curse*. To emphasize his point, he repeats it again in verse 9:

As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Why do we begin our study of Mormonism with that passage? For the simple reason that Mormonism began in the year 1820 with several visitations from alleged messengers from heaven who came to

young Joseph Smith Jr. and told him some very interesting things—things that were directly contradictory to the revealed Word of God.

The Law of Eternal Progression

The major heresy of Mormonism is summed up in its central theological axiom, the doctrine of the law of eternal progression. To believe in and teach this doctrine is to be so separated from Christian orthodoxy that the unrepentant adherent is consigned to a Christless eternity. It is stated as follows: As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become. Roll that through your mind a time or two:

“As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become”

This all starts with the LDS teaching that there are great numbers of planets scattered throughout the vastness of outer space which are ruled by countless exalted men-gods who once were human like us.

This may all sound like “Battlestar Galactica” to the average person, but upon this axiom is based the entire theology of Mormonism: from the temple rituals for the living to those for their dead; from the teaching that families are forever to the pressure on parents to send their youth to the mission fields across the world.

The Mormon people are committed to a controlled program that maps out their entire lives as they seek their own exaltation and godhood, their own planet to rule and reign over.

Let’s look at this mystery religion in simple terms. Perhaps the most basic work we ever did in this area was to summarize the core Mormon doctrine and put it together in a short animation sequence for the movie *The God Makers*. Let’s go through the actual script of that sequence for you.

Mormonism teaches that *trillions* of planets scattered throughout the cosmos are ruled by countless gods who once were human like us.

They say that long ago on one of these planets, to an unidentified god and one of his goddess wives, a spirit child named Elohim was conceived. This *spirit* child was later born to human parents who gave him a physical body.

Through obedience to Mormon teaching, death, and resurrection, he proved himself worthy and was elevated to godhood as his father before him.

Mormons believe that Elohim is their heavenly Father and that he lives with his *many wives* on a planet near a mysterious star called Kolob. Here the god of Mormonism and his wives, through endless celestial sex produced billions of spirit children.

To decide their destiny, the head of the Mormon gods called a great heavenly meeting. Both of Elohim’s eldest sons were there, Lucifer and his brother Jesus.

A plan was presented to build planet Earth, where the spirit children would be sent to take on mortal bodies and learn good from evil. Lucifer stood and made his bid for becoming savior of this new world. Wanting the glory for himself, he planned to force everyone to become gods. Opposing the idea, the Mormon Jesus suggested giving man his freedom of choice, as on other planets. The vote that followed approved the proposal of the Mormon Jesus, who would become savior of the planet Earth.

Those who remained neutral in the battle were cursed to be born with black skin. This is the Mormon explanation for the Negro race. The spirits that fought most valiantly against Lucifer would be born

into Mormon families on planet Earth, These would be the lighter-skinned people, or “white and delightsome,” as the Book of Mormon described them.

Early Mormon prophets taught that Elohim and one of his goddess wives came to Earth as Adam and Eve to start the human race. Thousands of years later, Elohim in human form once again journeyed to Earth from the star base Kolob, this time to have physical relations with the **Virgin** Mary in order to provide Jesus with a physical body.

Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde taught that after Jesus Christ grew to manhood he took at least three wives: Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene. Through these wives the Mormon Jesus supposedly fathered a number of children before he was crucified. Mormon founder Joseph Smith is supposedly one of his descendants.

According to the Book of Mormon, after his resurrection Jesus came to the Americas to preach to the Indians, who the Mormons believe are really Israelites. Thus the Jesus of Mormonism established his church in the Americas as he had in Palestine. By the year **AD. 421**, the dark-skinned Israelites, known as the Lamanites, had destroyed all of the white-skinned Nephites in a number of great battles. The Nephites’ records were supposedly written on golden plates buried in the Hill Cumorah by Moroni, the last living Nephite.

About **1400** years later a young treasure-seeker named Joseph Smith, who was known for his tall tales, claimed to have uncovered the same gold plates near his home in upstate New York. He is now honored by Mormons as a prophet because he claimed to have had visions from the spirit world in which he was commanded to organize the Mormon Church because all Christian creeds were an abomination. It was Joseph Smith who originated most of these peculiar doctrines which millions today believe to be **true**.

By maintaining a rigid code of financial and moral requirements, and through performing secret temple rituals for themselves and the *dead*, the Latter-day Saints hope to prove their worthiness and thus become gods. The

Mormons teach that everyone must stand at the final judgment before Joseph Smith, the Mormon Jesus, and Elohim.

Those Mormons who are sealed in the eternal marriage ceremony in LDS temples expect to become polygamous gods or their goddess wives in the Celestial Kingdom, rule over other planets, and spawn new families throughout eternity. The Mormons thank God for Joseph Smith, who claimed that he had done more for us than any other man, including Jesus Christ. The Mormons claim that he died as a martyr, shedding his blood for us so that we too may become gods.

Shocking? Incomprehensible? Maybe to you and to us, but *this is the core of Mormon theology*. It binds **its** believers away from the real Jesus, the real gospel, and the real spirit of truth as surely as though they were locked away in chains of metal.

The Mormon Jesus

To the Mormon, Jesus was our elder brother who pointed the way, but he isn’t The Way as we Christians understand it.

To the Mormon, Jesus was the god of the Old Testament, but once he took his physical form, he had to justify or earn his own spiritual salvation through his works while in the flesh, just as each of us must.

Mormonism teaches that Jesus suffered for our sins in the Garden of Gethsemane, providing personal salvation (which may mean exaltation to godhood) conditional upon our obedience to the laws and

ordinances of the LDS gospel .His death on the cross provided a *general* salvation, whereby all of us will be resurrected to be judged for our own works. Yet Paul says in Colossians 2 that Jesus removed those laws and ordinances that were against us, nailing them to the cross.

It is no wonder that you will never see a cross on a Mormon church—not when you see that Mormons cannot deal with its gift of grace. This is the same reason they use water for communion.

They call it The Sacrament, but that water washes away the reality of the blood shed for us at the cross of Christ.

Jesus is the LDS savior only in the sense that his death gives the Mormon the means of returning to the god of this world, using the secret keys, handgrips, and passwords learned only in the Mormon Temple, secrets that will ensure safe passage through the doorway to personal godhood.

What we have shared is just the tip of a dark and dangerous ice berg, filled with death for its unsuspecting victims.

Proverbs **14:12** says. There is a way which seems right to a man. but its end is the way of death (nkjv)

Was a Scripture ever more direct in a life-or-death issue?

The Mormon people are like those of whom Paul spoke in Romans 10:1-3:

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

² For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

³ Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

The Mormon God

Mormons teach four basic points on the doctrine of God. First, Mormons teach that God the Father has a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's.

Second, Mormons teach that God evolved from mortal man. Mormons believe that God is a finite man who has been evolving and changing to become God and now is a man-God in heaven with a body of flesh and bone, an exalted man who is God over this planet.

Third, Mormons teach polytheism. Polytheism is the belief in the existence of more than one god. Mormons believe there are literally millions of gods: father gods, mother gods, grandfather gods, grandmother gods, great-grandfather gods, great-grandmother gods, aunts, and uncles—literally millions of gods.

Fourth, every male Mormon is striving to become a god himself. Let's see what the first two Mormon prophets, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, said about the doctrine of God.

We quote a sermon given by Joseph Smith Jr. two months before he was killed in Carthage, Illinois, in **1844**. This sermon was heard by over 8,000 people. It was taken down by five Mormon scribes and published in the official Mormon publication *Times and Seasons*, volume 5, page **613**. It is also found in the LDS encyclopedic work *Mormon Doctrine* by Bruce R. McConkie, page **321**.

God was once as we are now, an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. I say if you were to see him today you would see him like a man in form like yourselves and all the person and image of man. I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take away the veil. God was once a man like us and dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ did, and you have got to learn to be gods yourselves the same as all gods before you. Namely by going from one small degree to another, from a small capacity to a greater one.

Brigham Young goes on to say:

The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming gods like himself. We are created to become gods like unto our father in heaven (*Journal of Discourses*, volume io, page 223).

Gods exist and we had better strive to become one with them 4 plurality of gods exist, indeed this doctrine of plurality of gods is so comprehensive and glorious that it reaches out and embraces every exalted personage. Those who attain exaltation are gods (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 577).

This concept isn't something taught a century ago but is no longer considered doctrine. The *Church News* is the official weekly news publication of the LDS church. On September 9, 1989, appeared an interesting article jhn0 the nature of God.

The prophet Joseph Smith made significant contribution to the world's limited understanding of the godhead. Perhaps one doctrine that most distinguishes Latter-day Saints from other denominations is the conviction that all worthy men and women can become gods and goddesses.

Journal of Discourses - vol 1 121, says this:

Remember that God our heavenly father was once a child and mortal like we are, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, and in the school of advancement has moved forward and overcome until he has arrived at the **point** where he is now,

Doctrine arid Covenants, one of the standard works of the Mormon faith, states in section 130 verse 22: God the Father has a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's.

This is actual Mormon doctrine and theology. We must test it against the teaching of God's **Word**.

To begin with, Mormons teach **that** the Father has a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's. What does the Bible say about this?

In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, we have a New Testament statement concerning the nature of the Father. It is given to us by Jesus Christ Himself. the one who knows better than anybody else. Jesus said:

²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth. (John 4:22-24)

Jesus said, "God is spirit." The logical question to ask is: What is a spirit? In Luke 24, Jesus defined what a spirit is. After His resurrection He appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and then His other disciples. They were startled and frightened **and thought they were seeing** a spirit

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost [spirit]. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see *I have*" When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet (Luke 24:37- 40).

Several years before he died, one of the very elderly apostles of the Mormon Church, Le Grand Richards, was presenting an apologetic trying to prove that God was a man in heaven with a body of flesh and bone. (This was during the Mormon semiannual conference being broadcast from Salt Lake City.)

He had just finished trying to prove his point when he went on to talk about who Jesus Christ was.

The first verse he read was Matthew **16:13**, but as he kept reading over national television his voice gradually tapered off to silence when he became aware that he should not be reading verse **17** after what he had just finished trying to prove!

In verse **13** Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" Simon Peter answered: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon BarJonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew **16:16,17 NKJv**).

Jesus clearly taught that the LDS doctrine of God having a body of flesh and blood is false. Jesus said that God is spirit, and that a spirit does not have flesh and bone, nor a body of flesh and blood. Mormons teach that God evolved from mortal man. When the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sings the anthems of the Church, they are not singing about the God of the Bible. They are singing about a finite man of flesh and bone who has been evolving and changing to become a god. Is God a finite man who has been evolving and changing, as the Mormons claim? What does God's Word say? In Numbers **23:19** we read, God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind."

In Hosea 11:9 we read, "I am God, and not man—the Holy One among you."

God is not a man who has been evolving and changing. In Malachi 3:6 we read, "I the **LoRD** do not change." In Psalm **90:2** we read, "From everlasting to everlasting you are God."

God is not in the process of evolving and changing. The Bible says that from everlasting to everlasting, God is God.

What the Mormons have ended up worshiping is a finite man of flesh and bone who is evolving and changing. But this is not the eternal, infinite, immutable God of the Bible! The Bible tells us what God thinks of the Mormon deity in Romans chapter **1**:

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man. . . They exchanged the truth of God for a lie (Romans **1:22,2,25**).

This is precisely what the Mormons have done.

The Mormons also teach polytheism—the belief in the existence of more than one God. They teach that there are literally millions of gods in the Mormon pantheon. What does the Bible say about this?

Here are some good verses to share with the next Mormon missionary who comes to your door.

This is what the **LORD** says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the **LORD** Almighty: "I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God" Isaiah 44:6).

Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one (Isaiah 44:8).

If God Himself doesn't know of any other gods, how could the Mormons know of millions of gods?

I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God (Isaiah 45:5).

Surely God is with YOU, and there is no other; there is no other god (Isaiah 45:14).

There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me (Isaiah 45:21).

Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:22).

Do you see the pattern of what God says?

To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? (Isaiah 46:5).

Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me! (Isaiah 46:9).

God says there isn't anyone like Him! He is the first and He is the last, and besides Him there is no other god. Simply put, the difference between Mormonism and Christianity is the difference between polytheism and monotheism, Nowhere in the history of the church or Scripture could a polytheist ever be a follower of God. In fact it was for polytheism that God destroyed the nations around Israel, and it was for polytheism that God destroyed Israel and sent it into exile in 722 B.C. It was for polytheism that God destroyed Judah in 586 B.C. and sent it into exile. God absolutely condemns polytheism.

Yet part of the Mormon doctrine of God is the belief that every male Mormon can become a god himself. Joseph Smith said, "You have got to learn to become gods yourselves the same as all gods before you." Brigham Young said, "The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming gods like himself. We are created to become gods like unto our father in heaven." Is it possible to become gods? What does God say in His Word?

"You are my witnesses;" declares the **LORD**, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me" (Isaiah **43:10**).

Joseph Smith

We do not have space to go into all the background of Joseph Smith Jr. He was known in the region of New York near Palmyra for digging for buried treasure and using occult seer stones to divine for hidden treasure. In fact, Michael Quinn, onetime professor of history at Brigham Young University, **wrote a** book entitled *Early Mormonism in the Magic World View*.

It clearly documents the fact that Joseph Smith was heavily involved in the occult before he ever began to receive revelations from his messengers of light. Mr. Quinn is no longer with BYU or the LDS church. While the LDS cannot refute his scholarship, they have nevertheless repudiated him personally.

Joseph Smith claimed that he went into the woods near his home to pray and inquire of God which of all the Christian churches was right and which one he should join. He recorded this event for us in his own words, and that story is now considered Scripture by the LDS church and sits as part of the standard works of the Mormon Church, in what is called *The Pearl of Great Price*. We find this quote in the book *Joseph Smith*, chapter 2, verses **15-19**:

I knelt down and began to offer up the desire of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak.

Thick darkness gathered around me and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

But exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous powers as I never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory de all descriptions, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me,

calling me by name and said pointing to the other—"this is my beloved son, hear him."

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the [Christian churches or] sects was right that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light which of all the sects [the Christian churches] was right and which I should join.

We want you to get the picture of what is happening here. Joseph Smith, already involved in the occult, said he went out into the woods to pray and that he was seized upon by some powerful being of the unseen world.

He said thick darkness gathered around him. His tongue was held bound so that he could not speak and he was sinking into despair, ready to succumb to this *actual being from the unseen world who had such marvelous powers*, when all of a sudden there appeared over his head a pillar of light in which were two personages.

He asked these personages, these beings of light, which Christian church was right and which one should he join. Here is what

he claims they answered (verse 19): I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all of their creeds were an abomination in his sight, and that all their teachers were corrupt.

This moment in **1820** was the moment that opened the door to Mormonism. A messenger of light told Joseph Smith that all the Christian churches were wrong and that all the teachings of Christianity were an abomination.

That means this personage of light was telling Joseph Smith that the trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the blood atonement of Calvary, and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ were all an abomination!

We need to ask ourselves, "Who was this personage of light in **1820** telling Joseph Smith that all the teachings of Christianity were an abomination? Who was speaking from that pillar of light?" Where did this different gospel come from? The apostle Paul answers the question for us:

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough....

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, 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 masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve (**2 Corinthians 11:2-4,13-1**).

Was Joseph a Prophet?

What about the Mormon Church's claim of a latter-day prophet? Was Joseph Smith a true prophet of God? The Mormon missionaries ask their prospects to pray and ask God to reveal to them, through a burning in the bosom, whether Joseph Smith was a true prophet.

Many people have prayed that prayer and received that burning in the bosom. Others have had visits from the spirits of their dead ancestors, telling them that the Mormon Church is true and that Smith was a true prophet.

People sometimes wonder why this happens when the inquirer was so sincere. How could God not answer correctly? The problem is that it wasn't God who answered! The reason for this is that the question comes through false teachers.

The Bible states: The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth (Psalm 145:8).

The key words are "all who call on him in truth." Submitted to false teachers, these people are victims being led to a spiritual slaughter. They are not calling upon God in truth. In biblical truth, we do not pray about a prophet being true or false; we test him according to the written Word of God. The first clue that something is wrong with the LDS prophet is the fact that the missionaries are unable (not always unwilling) to give you a list of the prophecies of Joseph Smith (or of any of their other prophets, for that matter).

The LDS Church has never produced an official list of Smith's prophecies. Why? Is it because the Church is unable to compile one? Hardly There is a different reason: Of the 65 to 70 prophecies that were recorded, only five or six actually came to pass. That's a pretty poor record even for the worst of prophets. The Bible states:

A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by *the* LORD? If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the **LORD** has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

Let's go back to the real heart of the heresy—what Joseph Smith said about the nature of God. is God a man? The Bible says He is not a man that He should lie. Jesus said that God is *spirit* rather than flesh and bone. The statements of Scripture should settle the issue on the nature of God. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter **1** that in times *past* God spoke through holy men and prophets but that today He speaks to us by His Son!

Who Will You Trust?

Who are you going to trust for your salvation, man or God? In trusting God, *fully* trust Him to your salvation. Trust in that sin offering of Christ offered up once for all.

There is a zeal to serve God seen in the actions of the Mormon people, but it is a terribly misguided zeal. We pray that you will have the opportunity to share that true joy of Christ's righteousness and love with your Mormon friends and loved ones.

Let them know that there is only *one* God, who is infinite and eternal, and is not a man. There is only one Savior, Jesus Christ, who took all the laws and ordinances that were against us and moved them out of the way, nailing them to His cross (Colossians **2:13-15.**)

¹⁶ know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 2:16