

Communicating Christ in a Multicultural World

6. Introduction to the Cults (ii)

Lesson Objectives

Understand what the main “Christian-related” cults teach, how people are drawn to them, and how to reach followers with the Gospel.

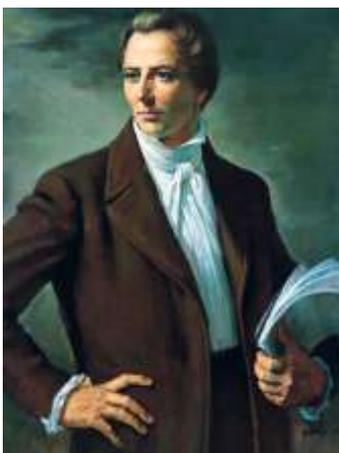


MORMONISM

Also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

Historical Background

Founded on 6 April 1830 by Joseph Smith Jr (1805-44). Smith claimed that, in the spring of 1820 (a period of revivalism and millenarianism in the US), he had a revelation of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, in bodily form, telling him that all Christian groups were false and that he was to join none of them. He published his account in 1842. Smith also claimed that in 1823 he had met the Angel Moroni, who led him to a hill near Palmyra, New York. In 1827 he did this and found a box containing gold plates and a "divine tool", a pair of spectacles, called Umim & Thummim (cf Exodus 2:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; I Samuel 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65) which, when worn, enabled him to read and decipher the plates. Being illiterate, he dictated the interpretation to two friends; the end result was the book of Mormon, published in 1830.



Smith. Moroni

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Smith claimed the plates and spectacles were taken away by when translation was complete. Subsequent "revelations" were added under the title "Doctrines and Covenants". Translated some "Egyptian papyri" (Book of Abraham and Book of Moses) that, with some other writings, became known as the Pearl of Great Price.

Brigham Young (Smith's successor) said, "Every Spirit that confesseth that Joseph is a prophet, and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God. and every Spirit that does not is of Antichrist."

Smith founded the Mormon Church, with himself as "seer, translator, prophet apostle Jesus Christ, and elder of the church". Moved with followers to Independence, Missouri (1838), claiming that this was the site of the original Garden of Eden and would be the place of Christ's return to earth. After violent clashes with non-Mormons, moved to Illinois (1839), where established the city of Nauvoo. He became Mayor, commander of his own army and aspired to the US Presidency.

Introduced polygamy, which ultimately led to his arrest. He was killed in a shoot-out with an angry mob of disillusioned followers at the jail in Cathage, Illinois in 1844 (related to his polygamist practices). He was considered a martyr.

After Smith's death, the movement fractured over leadership. The largest splinter group is the "Reorganised Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints", who claim to be the legal of the church founded by him.

Brigham Young leadership over the main movement (as the senior of 12 apostles). His followers (eventually some 80,000) travelled 1,800 kms west to Utah (then part of Mexico) where they settled in Salt Lake City from 1847. Their goal was to re-build Zion in the American West under their prophets. Official abolition of polygamy came under the third leader, John Taylor, who contributed to Utah eventually becoming part of the USA.



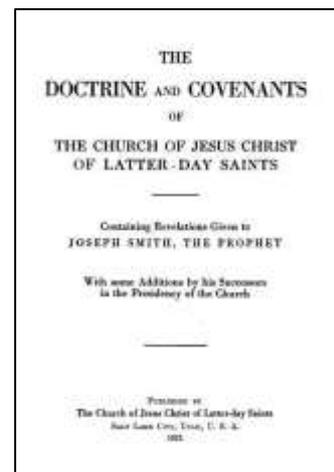
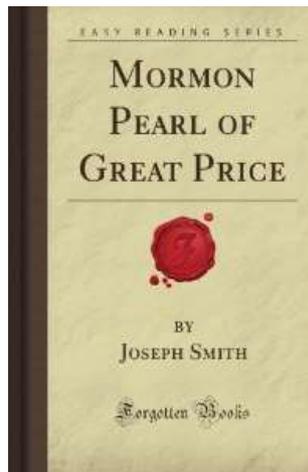
Mormonism appeals to US settlement icons



Current Status

Est. 10 million world wide - 50% in USA. Headquarters in Salt Lake City. The Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has around $\frac{1}{4}$ of a million.

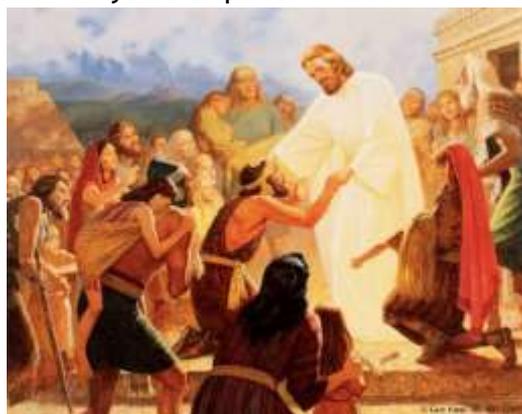
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The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is a volume of Mormon Scripture relating God's dealings with ancient people in the Americas from 600BC to 400AD. An essential "second witness" (2 Corinthians 13:1) to Christ, that describes His outreach to the "other sheep" of His fold (John 10: 16). Account of descendants of Lehi, a 6th Century BC prophet who lived in Jerusalem but was warned by God to flee the area with his family and several others (references are made to the prophet Nephi and the people of Jared, who came from the Tower of Babel). Guided to the New World, they founded a small civilisation. These Jaredites eventually became the Olmecs - a pre-Columban community in Mexico. Most of the text refers to the Nephites, who multiplied and into two rival groups (virtuous Nephites and sinful Lamanites, who eventually exterminated them and became the ancestors of the American Indians). The last migration was by the Mulekites, who fled the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem.

Mormons believe Jesus visited North America after his resurrection and ascension and ministered the Mormon people, repeating the Sermon on the Mount and other passages. Being Jewish, the "Book of Mormon people" understood the Old Testament sacrifices and were awaiting the Messiah who would be crucified to bring the mercy of God and the forgiveness of sins to the world through His atoning sacrifice. Jesus blessed the children, chose disciples to baptize and organise His Church. Ushered in 200 years of peace until the heathen Lamanites prevailed.



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A collection of writings about these events was compiled by prophet, historian, military leader Mormon, c. 400 AD, as a testimony to later Jews and Gentiles. Used "Reformed Egyptian". Wrote on gold plates, to ensure their survival. His son, Moroni, added final comments and buried them c. 421 AD in New York State.

Egyptologists deny any such language as Reformed Egyptian. The Smithsonian Institute in Washington has declared the works to be fraudulent. Some writers have claimed the entire account was a forgery. Contains verbatim passages from the Old Testament (in *King James Version* English) Lehi and the group that left Jerusalem are said to have carried brass plates containing many Old Testament writings. The timing of Joseph Smith's declaration coincided with theories in some circles that the American Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel (who had disappeared after Babylonian invasion of Judah in 586 BC). There were also numerous claims that Smith and his family were involved in occult groups.

Comparisons of Beliefs

Topic	Latter Day Saints (LDS) Position	Evangelical Position
God	<p>God is an exalted man". He is one of three gods, the head of the Council of Gods.</p> <p>"God is not a spirit, but a man like Brigham Young. "God the father (Elohim) has a body of flesh and bones, but no blood</p> <p>"Adam is God, Father of all, the Supreme God, Ancient of Days, Prince of All, the Creator of this world, our God, and the only God with whom we have to do"</p> <p>"When Adam came into the world he brought Eve, one of His wives with Him. He is Michael, the Archangel. '</p> <p>God the Father lives near the planet Kolob. He has wives — one is our heavenly mother. He begat human beings as physical offspring (however we were born as spirit children to him and his wives in pre-existence.</p>	<p>God is Spirit — John 4:24;</p> <p>God is one - Deuteronomy 6:4.</p> <p>Illogical conclusion given the account in Genesis 1-3. God pre-dated, created and was distinct from Adam.</p> <p>When Jesus came into the world all the angels worshipped him (Hebrews 1:6); this included Michael.</p> <p>These are blasphemous claims</p>

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<p>Jesus Christ</p>	<p>One of the three gods of the Trinity, sent after joint decision of the Council of Gods. "Firstborn" because God's first spirit child Lucifer was the second (and is Jesus' brother). Jesus was not born of the Holy Spirit, but was the result of a physical union between God and Mary</p> <p>Lived in Cana of Galilee and was a polygamist, he was married to Mary and Martha. This was how he "saw His seed" before He was crucified.</p>	<p>Isaiah 7.14 Virgin to bear a Child = God with us. The Gospel accounts are clear that the Holy Spirit caused Jesus to be conceived in Mary's womb. Scripture does say Jesus loved Mary and Martha, but Lazarus is also included in the text (John II) Bad hermeneutics.</p> <p>Reference to Jesus seeing His seed (Isaiah 53:10, 11) were after His resurrection and is about the church.</p>
<p>Holy Spirit</p>	<p>A man with a spiritual body of matter.</p> <p>Believe in laying on of hands for spiritual gifts, including prophecy, revelation and speaking in tongues.</p>	<p>The Bible teaches the Holy Spirit is a person and that he demonstrates a wide range of personality functions, eg mind, will, feelings. knowledge, teaching, witnessing, interceding, revealing, speaking, leading, forbidding, giving permission, being insulted, lied to, grieved, etc. The Holy Spirit is not a man, cf" He will dwell in you' John 14:17; "come on you" – Acts 1:8.</p>
<p>Mainstream Churches</p>	<p><i>"Christianity had become apostate, so the Lord called Joseph Smith to translate the Book of Mormon and establish "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth." (Doctrine and Covenants" 1831)</i></p> <p>Smith: "I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam</p> <p>Mormons believe churches are lacking the Holy Spirit, revelations, miracles and maintain corrupt rituals, priesthoods and teaching.</p>	<p>The Church is Christ's body, not man's. He is building it and holding it together – Ephesians 2:21-22.</p> <p>Jesus has been building His church since His resurrection – Matthew 16: 18</p>

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	<p>Mormonism is the sole Church of the Living God"</p> <p>Mormons believe the church age till the 1820s was a period of apostasy when prophecy ceased, after which the vision of all contained in the sealed book would appear (from Isaiah 29) . The work of Joseph Smith represented the "Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ"</p> <p>"All will be damned who are not Latter Day Saints"</p>	
Scriptures	<p>"The living prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything. the living prophet is more important to us than the standard works. the living prophet is more important to us than a dead prophet. The prophet and the First Presidency (the prophet and his counsellors) are always surrounded by his promises — follow them and be blessed, reject them and suffer."</p> <p>Where the Bible disagrees with Mormon doctrine it is considered incorrect due to textual corruption or false translation. The Bible is not enough</p> <p>Mormons interpret Ezekiel 37:15-17 (sticks of Joseph & Judah) to mean there would be two volumes of Scripture, including the Book of Mormon.</p>	<p>We are to live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4-4), but not false, blasphemous teachings.</p> <p>The Bible is the inspired Word of God — 2 Timothy 3:16. Revelation 22.18, 19 forbids adding to Scripture, however Mormons say this only refers to the Revelation.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit helps us understand the words of Christ (eg John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:27).</p> <p>This interpretation is bad hermeneutics. The prophecy is about the Jews.</p>
Sin	<p>The fall of Adam and Eve was a fall "upward" that enabled them to keep God's greater command to be fruitful and multiply</p>	<p>Sin brings death — Genesis 3:3, Romans 5:12-21. Adam and Eve were commanded to be fruitful and multiply before the Fall.</p>

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	<p>Good works cancel out sin.</p>	<p>There was no restriction on their ability to fulfil this command, certainly not that they sin beforehand God's "greater command" was obedience to His word.</p> <p>Works cannot cancel sin – Job 254, Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2 9; Titus 3:5.</p>
Salvation	<p>Brigham Young: "no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith. He holds the keys of that kingdom for the last dispensation"</p> <p>There are three heavens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Celestial (for Mormons) - Terrestrial (for good-living non-Mormons) - Telestial (for the wicked). <p>Being born again is being water baptised into Mormonism.</p> <p>Salvation is possible after death</p> <p>Believe Jesus died only for the sins of Adam</p>	<p>Salvation comes through believing in Jesus Christ – John 3: 16 – "whoever" believes in Him; Ephesians 2•8, 9 – saved by faith, not works.</p> <p>John 3 – rebirth is a spiritual experience.</p> <p>Judgement after death – Hebrews 9:27.</p> <p>I Peter 2:24 - "bore our sins" as well as Adam's. See also I John 2:2</p>
Hell	<p>Temporal existence where people will be punished for their sins</p>	<p>Jesus described Hell as literal, made for the Devil and his angels but the destiny of those who reject salvation.</p>

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<p>Priesthood</p>	<p>Aaronic (Deacons) – all worthy males become deacons at 12; may become teachers at 14 and priests at 16; after two years they may enter the Melchizedek (high priesthood) called 'Elders'.</p> <p>Mormon Missionaries give 18-24 months to proselytising. Memorise 7 lessons, "Uniform System of Teaching Families" to "sell" Mormonism.</p> <p>Encourage Bible studies, "bless" homes they visit; encourage people to read the Book of Mormon and pray to see if they receive a "warm feeling" that confirms it is of God</p> <p>A Mormon man may afterwards become a "seventy" (member of priesthood quorum of 70) and ultimately a high priest in the First Quorum of Seventy.</p>	<p>Best not to ask Mormons to "bless" our homes, cf 2 John 9-11,</p>
<p>Polygamy</p>	<p>Joseph Smith claimed that the Lord revealed to him that plural marriage (polygamy) was "a new and everlasting covenant" essential to exaltation to the highest glory in which men may become gods. (Doctrine and Covenants, 1843).</p> <p>Smith claimed revelation that Abraham's (imputed) righteousness was evidenced by his being given concubines. Declared some of Christ's disciples practiced it,</p> <p>Polygamy ultimately abandoned (and officially no longer part of Mormon doctrine), but many still consider it God's ideal.</p>	<p>No Biblical evidence (or even Jewish traditions) supporting these theories.</p> <p>Biblical teaching about marriage is very different from that of the Mormon faith.</p> <p>Matthew 22:30 – there is no marriage in Heaven; 1 Timothy 3:29 12 – husband of one wife,</p>

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	Mormons believe a man can become a god with a world of his own, providing he has a wife or wives (sealed as his for eternity in a temple "Celestial Marriage") who will be eternally pregnant giving him children to populate his own planet,	
Endowment	Mormon converts go through an endowment ceremony where they are washed, anointed and blessed. They receive a sacred garment (underwear) they believe will provide physical and spiritual protection.	This is unnecessary and superstition.
Proxy "Baptism for the Dead"	<p>Adult baptism signifies repentance and obedience. May be undertaken by proxy for salvation of those who die without knowledge of the truth Mormon interest in genealogy (the world's best) stems from desire to save dead ancestors.</p> <p>Based on teaching of baptismal regeneration (ie baptism necessary for salvation).</p> <p>Genealogy is important (at least back to four generations).</p> <p>Believe baptism is baptism into the Church and into the House of Israel (by adoption).</p>	<p>Misinterpretation of inconclusive text in I Corinthians 15:24, where Paul is not teaching baptism for the dead as a standard Christian practice.</p> <p>No Scriptural basis for baptismal regeneration We are saved and sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ alone – Galatians 4:26.</p>
Prohibitions	Tea, coffee, alcohol, tobacco – goes back to Joseph Smith's days.	No Scriptural prohibition. Let everyone be persuaded in their own mind about what to eat/drink, as long as they do not cause others to stumble – Romans 14.

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The Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints does not accept evolutionary concepts of deity, celestial marriage, baptism for the dead, polygamy or tithing. Reject the title "Mormon" because of association with polygamy (believe the practice was introduced by Young, not Smith).



Reaching Mormons with the Gospel

- ☞ Recognise individual needs
- ☞ Be generous in recognizing the value they place on family values and upright living.
- ☞ Get a good grasp of Mormon doctrine and how it differs from the Bible
- ☞ Be able to support your own claims from the Bible but remember Mormon teaching”

“We believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as translated correctly”

- ☞ Be kind and loving but firm when it comes to teachings.
- ☞ Don't be defensive
- ☞ Ask the Mormon to explain his key doctrines) from the Book of Mormon he can't
- ☞ Concentrate on Jesus Christ - don't get bogged down debating the Umim & Thummim, the sticks of Joseph and Judah, sacred underwear, temples, baptism for the dead, celestial gods (be aware of them, but make the Biblical Christ the main focus).