

There's a break in the action in the ball game on the television, and before you can hit the button to start channel-surfing, you are captivated by a touching, rare scene on the screen. You see a family in a living room--they are all there, the father, the mother, the three children--and they are playing games together, singing, and smiling. That strikes you as odd because seldom do you see such a sight these days. Then you notice the family gathers together for a "devotional" time, with the kids still smiling, and you begin to feel a little ashamed because your family hasn't had a devotional time in weeks, and when you did your kids weren't smiling. Then a deep, smooth voice speaks to you, "This experience can be yours. To obtain a free book, call this toll free number. Brought to you by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."

It's called the Church of Jesus Christ. But is it really? That's what the narrator said, didn't he?

When the sharp looking fellows in the white shirts and ties knock on your door, they smile confidently and kindly say, "We are from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (also known as Mormons)." You feel a little uneasy perhaps, so you ask, "Wait a minute. I've heard about you. You are a cult, aren't you?" They smile, and respond, "A lot of people misunderstand us. The truth is we are Christians. We believe in Jesus Christ. Don't you?" The question catches you off guard, and you think to yourself, "Maybe I was wrong. Maybe these people are okay after all. They call themselves Christians, and they believe in Jesus Christ. Isn't that all that matters? What's more, their faith seems to be more real to them than mine is to me. I can't even remember the last time I knocked on some stranger's door to talk to them about Christ." And before you know it, you invite them into your home.

Is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints merely another Protestant denomination? What do the Mormons believe? Our aim tonight is to provide a biblical response to Mormonism.

Does it really matter, you might ask? What the Mormons are doing is not affecting us, is it? It is. The Mormon Church has 29,000 full-time missionaries (about as many as the entire evangelical Church). What's even more alarming is what I am about to say next. The Mormon missionaries reach half to three-fourths of their converts from members of Christian churches.¹ We must be prepared.

The Mormons have a well-organized, public-relations plan. One Mormon source has indicated that through newspaper inserts, national magazine advertising, and through television advertising, the Mormons expect to spend over 100 million dollars in annual advertising costs in the 1990's.² They present the public with a carefully constructed image, a caring, family-centered church. But what's behind the image?

*** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹James Spencer, Have You Witnessed to a Mormon Lately?, p. 47.

²Ron Carlson, Fast Facts on False Teachings, p. 163.

Proposition: Tonight, our aim is to provide a biblical response to Mormonism. To accomplish this, we will seek to answer three important questions.

I. What is the History of Mormonism?

A. How did the Mormon Church begin?

1. Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844)
2. Brigham Young (1801-1877)

B. What are the Sacred Books of Mormonism?

1. Book of Mormon
2. Doctrine and Covenants
3. Pearl of Great Price
4. The Bible, "as far as it is translated correctly"

II. What are the Beliefs of Mormonism? How do they differ from biblical Christianity?

A. The Doctrine of God

1. God the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 130:ZZ).
2. God evolved from mortal man.
3. Mormons teach polytheism, the belief in the existence of more than one god.

4. Every male Mormon is striving to become a god.

The Biblical Response: Deut 4:35; 1 Tim 2:5; Mt 16:15-17; Jn 4:24

B. The Doctrine of Revelation

1. The canon of Scripture has never been closed.
2. The book of Mormon is a divinely inspired record.
 - There have been over 4,300 changes in this "inspired" text since 1833.

•There are over 25,000 words plagiarized from the KJV.

The Biblical Response: 2 Tim 3:16-17; Rev 22:18

C. The Doctrine of Christ

1. Jesus is a man who evolved to become a god.
2. Jesus was our Elder brother who pointed the way, but isn't The Way.
3. Jesus was the brother of Satan.
4. Jesus was born through physical incest.

The Biblical Response: Jn 1:1, 14, 18;

D. The Doctrine of Atonement

1. On the cross, Jesus provided a general salvation.
2. Jesus' sweating in the Garden opened up a universal salvation for all people. Salvation is a combination of faith + baptism + obedience to the laws and ordinances + good works + membership in the Mormon church.
3. There is no hell, but there are three levels in heaven.
 - Telestial heaven--all bad people will go here
 - Terrestrial heaven--all non-Mormon good people go here
 - Celestial heaven--all baptized Mormons will go here
4. Baptism is the gateway into the kingdom of heaven.
5. Jesus' atonement is not adequate nor sufficient. A person may atone for his own sins by shedding his own blood.

The Biblical Response: Heb 9:11-14; 1 Jn 1:9

E. The Doctrine of the Temple

1. The temples are not places of teaching or worship.
2. The temple is used for secret rituals, baptisms for the dead, and celestial marriages.
3. Joseph Smith took the temple rituals right out of Scottish Freemasonry (such as secret handshakes, blood rituals). Smith was a Master Mason prior to this.

The Biblical Response: Jn 4:23-24; 1 Cor 3:16

Summary: The difference between Mormonism and Christianity is the difference between polytheism and monotheism. The LDS church believes and teaches that all good Mormons will become gods someday. The Bible teaches that there is one God Who calls all men to repent and believe in His Son.

III. How should we respond to Mormism?

- A. We need to love the people of Mormonism.
- B. We need to expose the error of Mormonism (see Galatians 1:6-9)

I. What is the History of Mormonism?

There are nine million members presently in the Mormon church, although only half of them are active. Last year, the church grossed \$5 billion. Politically, it is in control of the states of both Utah and Idaho. It owns 50% of the L.A. Times newspaper.³

The history of the Mormon church goes back to the past century. The Mormon church does not claim to be either Protestant or Roman Catholic, but in fact believes that it alone is the true church of Jesus Christ. They are convinced that they alone speak for God, and everyone else is wrong. This conviction is rooted in its very origin.

A. How did the Mormon Church begin?

Two key figures are central in the historical formation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (or LDS): Joseph Smith, Jr., and Brigham Young.

1. Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844)

Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, in 1805, and later moved to Palmyra, New York. There, in 1820, he reported seeing his first heavenly vision. Two personages appeared. In the Pearl of Great Price, Smith says their "brightness and glory defy all description...One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other--"This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"⁴

It's important to realize that Joseph Smith had been heavily involved in the occult prior to this. A former professor at B.Y.U., Michael Quin, documented this fact, and was fired from his position because of it.

Joseph Smith received a series of visitations from a "resurrected personage" named Moroni. On September 22, 1827, Moroni delivered to Smith the "golden plates," the translation of which is known as the Book of Mormon. In May 1829, John the Baptist appeared and ordained Smith along with Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic priesthood. In June, Peter, James, and John came to the same two and conferred on them the Melchizedek Priesthood, an act which established the authority of the "Church."⁵

³Ron Carlson, "Confronting a New Age of Cults" class notes, Grace Seminary, 1/6/96

⁴Irvine Robertson, What the Cults Believe, p. 30.

⁵Ibid, p. 30.

Thus, on April 6, 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was formerly established in Fayette, New York. It had six members.

2. *Brigham Young (1801-1877)*

Young was the second president and prophet of the Mormon church. It was Young who led the Mormons to Great Salt Lake, Utah, in 1846-1847.

Both men practiced polygamy. Joseph Smith had 43 wives. Brigham Young had 57 wives and 186 children. Today, Mormons are trying to whitewash their embarrassing past, spending millions of dollars to promote the image of "family life." The truth is Mormons did not stop practicing polygamy until 1890, and then only because the U.S. government threatened to take away Utah if it did not. To solve the dilemma, the Mormon leader at the time, Wilford Woodruff, supposedly received "new" revelation from God which contradicted what Joseph Smith had taught about polygamy.

B. What are the Sacred Books of Mormonism?

There are four sacred books.

1. *Book of Mormon*

Mormons claim that this book was given to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni (which means "son of Mormon," an Indian). It describes the history of two great civilizations of Indians: the Nephites and the Lamanites. After his resurrection, Jesus came to the Americas to preach to the Indians, who the Mormons believe are really Israelites. Jesus established his church in America, the problem was that by the year 421 A.D., the dark skinned "Israelites," known as the Lamanites, had destroyed all the white-skinned Nephites. The Nephites records were supposedly written on golden plates buried by Moroni, the last living Nephite.

As the story goes, 1400 years later, Joseph Smith said he found these plates in upstate New York. In a moment we'll talk about the corruption of this supposedly "sacred" book. For now, suffice it to say there is no archaeological evidence for the places mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The book is a fraud.⁶

Mormons also view the following books as authoritative.

2. *Doctrine and Covenants*

3. *Pearl of Great Price*

4. *The Bible, "as far as it is translated correctly"*

Many people do not realize the extent of the internal moral corruption within Mormonism. We have been influenced by the Mormon advertising which suggests that Mormons have problem-free families. James Spencer, a former Mormon, points out the statistics show otherwise, "For example, Utah, which is 67% Mormon, records divorce rates, child abuse rates, teen suicide rates, rape rates, and child homicide rates consistently higher than the national average."⁷

The following statistics verify this (p. 27):

--Salt Lake City has twice the number of rapes as other cities its size.

--20% of all murder victims in Utah are under the age of 15 (five times the national average).

⁶Ron Carlson, *Fast Facts*, p. 167.

⁷James Spencer, *Have You Witnessed to a Mormon Lately*, p. 27.

--Authorities have dubbed Utah "The fraud capitol of the world." U.S. Attorney Brent Ward says 10,000 investors lost \$200 million between 1980-1982 in Utah-connected frauds.

--According to the National Center for Health Statistics, Utah marriages last only two-thirds as long as those of the nation as a whole. And the most common age for women to divorce in Utah is age 20.

--Forty percent of all women marry in their teens in Utah and of those who have children in their teens, two thirds are pregnant out of wedlock.

--Teen suicide in Utah is 20% higher than the national average.

--Utah is the 34th most populous state, but ranks 13th in child abuse in the nation.

These statistics verify the importance of a statement made by our Lord, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32)." When the truth is abandoned, the result certainly is not freedom, but moral captivity.

II. What are the Beliefs of Mormonism? How do they differ from biblical Christianity?

Let's examine several key doctrinal areas in which Mormon belief digresses from orthodox Christianity.

A. The Doctrine of God

Every active Mormon is a polytheist, though he may not use the term. Every active, orthodox Latter-day Saint recites: "As man is, God once was; and as God is, man may become." Every practicing Mormon hopes that one day he himself will be a god.⁸

Mormonism teaches that men can become gods. In fact, the trillions of planets in the cosmos are ruled by countless gods who once were human like us.

They teach that long ago on one of these planets, an unidentified god and one of his goddess wives conceived a spirit child named Elohim. The spirit child was later born to human parents who gave him a physical body. Through obedience to Mormon teaching, Elohim proved himself worthy and was elevated to godhood as his father before him.

Elohim, who lives with his many wives on a planet near a mysterious star called Kolob, fathered many children. His eldest sons are Lucifer and Jesus.⁹

Here is a summary of Mormon belief about the doctrine of God:

1. *God the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's (Doctrine and Covenants, 130:ZZ).*
2. *God evolved from mortal man.*
3. *Mormons teach polytheism, the belief in the existence of more than one god.*
4. *Every male Mormon is striving to become a god.*¹⁰

Realize this. When the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sings beautiful songs, it is not singing about the God of the Bible, but about a flesh-and-blood god in heaven who is sexually active populating this earth!

Joseph Smith preached, "God was once as we are now, an exalted man...I am going to tell you how God became God...You have got to learn to be Gods yourselves."

⁸James Spencer, Have You Witnessed to a Mormon Lately, p. 84.

⁹Ron Carlson, Fast Facts, p. 166.

¹⁰Ron Carlson, class notes

Brigham Young said, "The Lord created us...for the purpose of becoming Gods ourselves." And also, "Man is the king of kings and lord of lords in embryo."¹¹

What does the Bible have to say about such teaching?

The Biblical Response: Deut 4:35; 1 Tim 2:5; Mt 16:15-17; Jn 4:24

Satan's tactics have changed little since the Garden. He convinced Eve that by eating the fruit she could become as God. Similar is the lie he promotes through Mormon doctrine.

What is the doctrine of God according to the Bible? We read in Deut 4:35, "Unto thee it was shown that thou mightest know that the LORD, he is God; there is none else beside him." How many "gods" are there? There is one God, the LORD. 1 Timothy 2:5 states, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus."

A particularly thorny text for Mormons is Matthew 16:15-17. After Peter confessed the true identity of Christ, the Lord responded (17), "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Notice Jesus explicitly says that His Father in heaven is NOT what? He is NOT flesh and blood, contrary to Mormon teaching.

What is God? John 4:24 tells us, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

B. The Doctrine of Revelation

What do Mormons believe about how God reveals truth to us? They hold to two, non-biblical assumptions.

1. The canon of Scripture has never been closed.

Mormons hold other sacred books to be authoritative, in addition to the Bible. In fact, the Mormon church has a present day, living prophet through whom God still speaks.

2. The book of Mormon is a divinely inspired record.

So Mormons claim. The hard facts prove otherwise.

- There have been over 4,300 changes in this "inspired" text since 1833. One problem we have in dealing with Mormons is that Mormons do not believe their own books theologically. Their sacred books are full of internal contradictions which they acknowledge (even documented by Mormon scholars), yet ignore.

- There are over 25,000 words plagiarized from the KJV. The Mormons, however, claim that the Book of Mormon was written down by an American Indian 1,000 years before the KJV was translated!

The Biblical Response: 2 Tim 3:16-17; Rev 22:18

What does the Bible have to say about special revelation? We are told in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The Word of God is inspired, inerrant, and infallible. The sacred books of Mormonism are not.

In fact, I remind you what God has to say about those who would add revelation to His Word. Revelation 22:18 states, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." The canon of Scripture is closed.

¹¹Carlson, Fast Facts, p. 171.

My first exposure to Mormonism came when I was in the 4th grade. My father took a summer position working at a camp in Wisconsin, so our family moved there for a couple of months. While we were gone, we rented our home to a family, which as it turned out, was Mormon.

They were quite nice, and later, after we returned and they purchased a home in a nearby community, the son even invited me to spend the night in their home. I discovered that, other than their refusal to drink products with caffeine, their family was not much different than mine. They were moral, upright, and sincere.

But being sincere does not make one right.

Some time ago, a newspaper article covered the story of a young babysitter who put the baby in the bathtub, then plugged in a radio, and set it on the edge of the tub. The babysitter wanted to entertain the baby during the bath. She wanted to do right. Her intentions were good. But the radio fell into the bath water. The baby was electrocuted.¹²

Were the babysitter's actions insincere? No--they simply were wrong. Believing something is right does not make it so.

Part 2: Next week...

C. The Doctrine of Christ

1. *Jesus is a man who evolved to become a god.*
2. *Jesus was our Elder brother who pointed the way, but isn't The Way.*
3. *Jesus was the brother of Satan.*
4. *Jesus was born through physical incest.*

The Book of Mormon teaches that when Jesus returns, He will return to Independence, Missouri, which will become the New Jerusalem (it was once the garden of Eden).

The Biblical Response: Jn 1:1, 14, 18;

D. The Doctrine of Atonement

1. *On the cross, Jesus provided a general salvation.*
2. *Jesus' sweating in the Garden opened up a universal salvation for all people. Salvation is a combination of faith + baptism + obedience to the laws and ordinances + good works + membership in the Mormon church.*
3. *There is no hell, but there are three levels in heaven.*

¹²James Spencer, Have You Witnessed to a Mormon Lately?, 71.

- Telestial heaven--all bad people will go here
- Terrestrial heaven--all non-Mormon good people go here
- Celestial heaven--all baptized Mormons will go here

4. *Baptism is the gateway into the kingdom of heaven.*

5. *Jesus' atonement is not adequate nor sufficient. A person may atone for his own sins by shedding his own blood.*

The Biblical Response: Heb 9:11-14; 1 Jn 1:9

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1. *The temples are not places of teaching or worship.*
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3. *Joseph Smith took the temple rituals right out of Scottish Freemasonry (such as secret handshakes, blood rituals). Smith was a Master Mason prior to this.*

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Summary: The difference between Mormonism and Christianity is the difference between polytheism and monotheism. The LDS church believes and teaches that all good Mormons will become gods someday. The Bible teaches that there is one God Who calls all men to repent and believe in His Son.

III. How should we respond to Mormism?

A. We need to love the people of Mormonism.

James Spencer offered a thought-provoking insight into how to evangelism Mormons. He states (p. 178): "My theory is that it is a waste of time to talk to Mormons

about salvation until they have come to doubt the ability of Mormonism to save them. They are blind to the Gospel; the idea of the Cross is foolishness to them. Only when they Mormon sees that Mormonism is wrong will his false god, which blinds him to the Gospel, lose some of its authority over him. Only then will he begin to ask, 'What must I do to be saved?'"

This makes sense. A person will not realize his need for a Savior until he recognizes that he is lost. The truth holds for witnessing to non-Mormons as well. Until a person is brought to a point of despair, he will not appreciate the wonder of the gospel of grace. In evangelism, we must not only talk about "good news," but also point out the "bad news" concerning the predicament of all other approaches to God.

It is encouraging to be reminded that other religions have come and gone, but true Christianity has stood. Spencer states the following (p. 187): "Church history teaches that false religion, like all mediocre ideas, is doomed to failure, because it cannot sustain enthusiasm. Throughout the history of the Church of Jesus Christ, spurious groups, once they had broken with Christian orthodoxy, followed a path of decline to oblivion:

--The Donatists are no more.

--The Gnostics survive only on the arcane fringes of the occult.

--The spiritualists--as Abraham Lincoln said of slavery--glowed for a time; but their wicks went out and they 'stank in the dark' for a season before slipping into oblivion.

--Christian Science, once the darling of the intelligentsia, is now a religion of old ladies and I believe it will be dead in a generation; Swedenborgianism is a joke; Scientology is foundationless; and the foundations of the Zion Curtain are cracking."

"Mormonism is at the beginning of decline. It is, in spite of its monolithic facade, crumbling, falling from inside out."

B. We need to expose the error of Mormonism (see Galatians 1:6-9)

Turn to Galatians 1.