

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, once said that men live on the moon. According to him, the moon-dwellers were about six feet tall, dressed like Quakers, and lived to be about a thousand years old.¹

You will never hear such information on the attractive television advertisements promoting the Mormon church. Nor will you hear the following, yet it's all documented in the Mormon sacred books:

Jesus Christ is the "spirit brother" of Satan. Jesus was conceived as the result of physical sex between God the Father and the Virgin Mary, and was not conceived by the Holy Spirit. The wedding in Cana was the wedding of none other than Jesus Himself, who wed three women--Mary, her sister Martha, and "the other Mary"--he also had children by them. Every worthy member of the Mormon Church can become a god. In fact, Mormons teach that God was once a man, who "progressed to godhood." The doctrines of the holy Trinity and salvation by grace are, in the words of Mormon apostle Bruce R. McConkle, "the two Great Heresies of Christendom."²

The Mormon church is spending millions of dollars to present quite a different image to our society, an appealing, family-oriented alternative to the traditional church (it began in 1820). But is the Mormon church truly an orthodox alternative? Is it just another version of Protestantism? Is it truly the "Church of Jesus Christ" as it claims? The answer is no, as we are seeing in our two week study.

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

Last Week:

- 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.

** 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. 23.

²Ibid, p. 26.

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

Part 2: This week...

As we have seen already, the Mormon church holds to unbiblical views of the doctrines of God and revelation. Such is likewise the case when we examine their doctrine of Christ.

C. The Doctrine of Christ

What does the Mormon church believe and teach about Jesus? It believes the following.

1. *Jesus is a man who evolved to become a god.*

The Book of Mormon teaches that God evolved from mortal man (see Mormon 9:9-10; Moroni 8:18). God Himself is a finite man who has progressed. He is not infinite or eternal, and is over only this world.

The reason Joseph Smith taught polygamy was he claimed we need to mass-produce human bodies for the spirit-babies in heaven. He claimed that every person on earth was the sexual offspring of God and his wives in heaven.

So Jesus is merely a man who evolved to become a god. He is one god in a pantheon of gods.

2. *Jesus was our Elder brother who pointed the way, but isn't The Way.*

Mormonism is a works-salvation system, as we will see in a moment.

Mormonism wants its converts to get a "feeling" (a burning in the bosom) that its beliefs are true. But Jesus never said, "Get a burning in your bosom about Me." Rather, He said, "Test Me by the Scriptures (see John 5:39)."³

3. *Jesus was the brother of Satan.*

Joseph Smith taught, "Among the spirit children of Elohim, the first-born was and is Jehovah, or Jesus Christ, to whom all others are juniors."⁴ The difference between Jesus and man or demon is one of degree or position, not of kind. It was by his obedience and devotion that he attained the rank of God.

4. *Jesus was born through physical incest.*

Mormons do not believe in the virgin birth by the Holy Spirit. They believe that Jesus was conceived by a physical god, that God the Father came to earth to have sexual

³Spencer, pp. 96, 97.

⁴Robertson, p. 38.

relations with Mary. That obviously differs from the biblical record (see Matthew 1, Luke 2).

There are other divergences as well. Alma 7:10 says, "He shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem," contrary to Micah 5:2 which predicted he would be born in Bethlehem). 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).

Perhaps you are wondering, "How can they believe such things when the Bible clearly contradicts them?" You need to realize two things. First, Mormons do not question their beliefs. For instance, they believe the Jews became the American Indians, even though the Jews are from a Semitic background ethnically, unlike the Indians. Second, realize that the Mormons themselves often do not believe their sacred books theologically. They can't for they are full of inherent, gross contradictions. In the past fifteen years, they have thrown out objective reasoning. The new approach of the Mormon missionary is, "Have you prayed about whether Mormonism is true? I have and found it to be true."

That's a very dangerous way to establish truth, yet many evangelical Christians use the same reasoning. "Don't confuse me with the facts. I don't need to study the Bible. I've prayed about the matter, and I just feel this is right for me."

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

What does the Bible teach about the Person of Jesus Christ? In the gospel of John, we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (1:1)." Jesus Christ did not become God, but has always been and always will be deity.

Notice also verse 14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." God became a man in the incarnation (man does not become God).

Consider also verse 18, "No man has seen God at any time {he does not have a "body of flesh and bone"}; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared Him." God is invisible and unseen by human eye, yet Jesus Christ revealed Him during the incarnation. Jesus Christ is God.

D. The Doctrine of Atonement

In Mormon doctrine, there are two aspects of salvation: general (or unconditional), and individual (or conditional). General salvation is assured for all. Individual salvation pertains to the eternal progression of the individual soul towards godhood, and depends obedience and works.⁵

The summary of the Mormon doctrine of atonement is as follows:

1. On the cross, Jesus provided a general salvation.

Mormon doctrine teaches that it was necessary for Adam and Eve to sin, so they could become gods. They didn't fall downward, but upward!

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.

⁵Robertson, p. 43.

The Mormons hate the blood and the cross. When they take communion, they use water, not juice. There is no cross on the top of the Mormon temple, rather the angel Moroni.

Mormons will say, "Oh, we believe in the blood." But what they mean is that Jesus's sweating in the garden opened up universal salvation for all people. There is no hell, but rather three degrees in heaven.⁶

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

There are also "levels" in celestial heaven. The highest level is "Exaltation" where you actually attain godhood. The goal of every Mormon woman is to be married in the Temple so that one day, when her husband calls for her beyond the grave, she too will be exalted, and be eternally pregnant populating her own planet.

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

In Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith said, "They who believe not on your words, and are not baptized in water in my [Jesus'] name, for the remission of their sins, that they may receive the Holy Ghost, shall be damned (84:74)."

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

Utah is the only state out of fifty that utilizes execution by a firing squad in carrying out the death penalty (Idaho began last year). Do you know why? It's because Utah is controlled by the Mormon church, and death by firing squad sheds blood. Mormons believe that a person atones for his own sin by shedding his blood. The records show that Brigham Young actually killed many men to help them atone for their own sins.

In the video, "The Executioner's Song," which is the story of Gary Gilmore, Gilmore had to atone for his own sin, which he did the moment the executioner's bullets hit his chest, according to Mormon theology.

The fact is, Mormons will say, "We believe in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. We are the Church of Jesus Christ." The problem is that's like taking a mayonaise jar, emptying out all the mayonaise, filling it with Crisco, and putting it back in the refrigerator. It still says it's mayonaise, and it even looks like it's mayonaise, but it's not! That's what Mormonism has done. They say they are Christians. They look like they are, but if you peel away the outward wrapping, and taste their real substance, you'll choke. Appearances can be deceiving.⁷

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

What is the biblical doctrine of atonement? One key text is Hebrews 9:11-14, which states, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of

⁶Ron Carlson, class notes

⁷Ron Carlson, "Class Notes: Confronting a New Age of Cults," 1/9/96

goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

We do not atone for ourselves. Christ alone has provided atonement for sin. How do we appropriate His atonement? The answer is given in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

E. The Doctrine of the Temple

The Mormon church has spent millions of dollars in the construction of elaborate temples throughout the world. What is the significance of the temples for the LDS?

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.*

The goal of every Mormon couple is to be married in the temple. Only 10% of Mormons have ever gone through the Temple.

The Mormon church keeps detailed genealogical records. They practice baptisms for dead relatives. The person being baptized believes himself to be the "savior" of the dead person. Last year, Mormons spent over \$187 million on keeping genealogies, which are secured in a granite vault outside of Salt Lake City.

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.*

What does God's Word say about the temple?

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

God does not dwell in a temple made by human hands. He is a Spirit (Jn 4:23-24). He dwells in His people, the Church (see 1 Cor 3:16).

We can sum up the differences with the following statement.

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.

The reason no man will make it to godhood is because God says so. Consider Isaiah 43:10-11, "You are my witnesses, saith the Lord...before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no savior."

Ron Carlson suggests the following as a way to help Mormons grasp their fallacy. Say to them, "Did you know that your doctrine that you may become god is in the Bible? It is, in Genesis 3:3-4." The serpent told Eve, if she disobeyed God's command, she could become as God. The same lie that got Adam and Eve kicked out of the garden is being used today to deceive Mormons.

III. How should we respond to Mormism?

Note: The Reorganized Church of LDS is quite different from the group in Salt Lake City. It formed as a split off by Emma Smith, one of Joseph Smith's wives, who was fed up with his polygamy. The Reorganized church did away with polygamy, has

never taught that God has a body in heaven, and in some ways is much closer to the Bible than to the Salt Lake City Mormons.

The problems with the RLDS is that they still accept the Book of Mormon as God's Word. They still accept Joseph Smith. They still accept the temple ritual. Their system as well is a legalistic works-salvation.⁸

So how should we respond to the Mormons? We need to do two things.

A. We need to love the people of Mormonism.

Mormons are not the enemy. They are victims of the enemy. In love we must throw out the lifeline to them, and to all others who are outside of Christ.

James Spencer offered a thought-provoking insight into how to evangelize Mormons. He states:⁹ "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 the 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."

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

We must first love the people of Mormonism.

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

Turn to Galatians 1, where we see how Paul dealt with another group (the Judaizers) that altered the pure gospel of Christ. Notice what he wrote in Galatians 1:6-9, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other

⁸Ron Carlson, class notes

⁹Spencer, p. 178.

gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

We must never compromise the doctrinal truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul says if anyone, even himself, preaches a gospel different from the one once delivered to the saints, as recorded in the New Testament, let him be accursed.