

Mormonism

True Prophet...True Scripture...True Church

Officially known as *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (LDS), Mormonism claims a worldwide membership of more than 12 million, with the largest concentration living in the United States (5 million). Salt Lake City, Utah is its headquarters. Believing that the early church fell into apostasy, and claiming to be the restored “true church” of Jesus Christ in these latter days, founded by the “true prophet” of God (Joseph Smith), based on the last “true scriptures” from God, Mormonism is indeed a difficult nut for the orthodox Christian to crack. How did this formerly polygamy-practicing, baptizing of the dead, tea-totaling cult become one of the fastest growing “religions” in this country and the world? Let’s take a look at its beginning.

Joseph Smith, Jr. – founder and prophet

On September 21, 1823, when he was only 17 years old, Joseph Smith, Jr. claimed he was visited by an angel named Moroni. Moroni was the son of Mormon, an ancient inhabitant of America, and told Joseph where he could find a set of golden plates which were the “Everlasting Gospel” as handed down by the Savior to these ancient inhabitants of America. With them, he found 2 magic stones, the Urim and the Thummim, which helped him translate these plates. This “translation” which no one saw him do, was published and known as the Book of Mormon and was purported to be God’s Word. (*Galations 1:8*)

In 1830, Smith and his followers migrated west in search of a city to establish their church – from Kirtland, Ohio to Zion, Missouri (where they claimed the entire town for the Lord) to Nauvoo, Illinois. They were continually driven from these towns and eventually in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith was killed by an angry mob of citizens in 1844. Brigham Young was named leader and in 1847 led them to Salt Lake City, Utah. This has been their temple headquarters, ‘Mecca’ and center of operations ever since.

So What’s the Difference (what they believe)?

1. **God** – God was once a man (*John 4:24*) and achieved godhood. Therefore, all men can achieve godhood as well. The Mormons do not believe in a unified trinity, rather that God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are 3 separate beings. There are many gods and the plan for man was devised by a council of gods lead by the head of the gods. God did not create the world from nothing, but re-ordered existing matter (*Isaiah 43:10, I Corinthians 8:4, Genesis 1*)
2. **Jesus Christ** – Jesus was the first of the spirit children (between God and a heavenly mother) that exist in heaven waiting to be born and was the spirit brother of Lucifer. He was divine (by appointment, but not by nature) and not the true and only Son of God. (*John 1:14*) Brigham Young wrote that Jesus married Mary, Martha and Mary Magdalene and the wedding at Cana was his. Jesus death on the cross ‘saved’ everyone.
3. **Man and sin** – Man is a pre-existent spirit who takes his bodily form at birth here on earth. There are many “spirit children” in heaven waiting to be born. Man is continually progressing toward godhood. The original Adamic sin did not condemn man, but rather man’s personal sins condemn him. (*I Corinthians 15:21-22, Romans 5:12*) Christ’s atonement for man’s personal sins was universal and at His death, all men were “saved”.
4. **Salvation** – Salvation is attainable by all men (general salvation). It is a combination of *faith* (in God, the Mormon scriptures, Joseph Smith as the true prophet) plus *works* plus *baptism*. People are “saved” to different levels in heaven depending on their works, life and beliefs. However, a personal acceptance of Christ’s universal atonement is required.

Baptism and marriage are definitive factors in determining the eternal reward. Baptism is so important that Mormons can be baptized on behalf of their dead relatives. This “baptism by proxy” is a cornerstone of Mormon beliefs. Eternal life is earned for both the living and the dead through it. Marriage and family is important because 1) it produces bodies for the spirit children to inhabit and 2) it continues in heaven (celestial marriage) where the couples produce more spirit children. And so on, and so on...

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5. **Heaven and hell** – First of all, Mormons believe there is no literal hell as we believe. It is referred to as the “outer darkness”. Heaven is divided into 3 levels. *Everyone* will attain one of these levels.

LEVEL 1 – The Telestial Kingdom/Heaven – This is for the unbelievers, sinners, etc.

LEVEL 2 – The Terrestrial Kingdom/Heaven – This is for the good people of the world (like Christians) and other religions who did not follow the Mormon way (but are in some way better than the sinners).

LEVEL 3 – The Celestial Kingdom/Heaven – This is it. The highest of all heavens. Reserved for the true believers. It is divided into 3 sub-kingdoms, with the highest sub-kingdom being a kind of godhood.

6. **The Bible** – The Mormons recognize the Holy Bible, but feel it has been tainted by the Catholic and Orthodox churches and therefore unreliable. The “true scriptures” for the Mormons are:

The Book of Mormon – Directly translated by Joseph Smith himself from the sacred golden plates, the Book of Mormon is the story of two great migrations to America. The Jaredites came to the Americas in 2250 B.C. after the Tower of Babel. Over the years, they killed each other off. The second group was a Jewish prophet named Lehi and his family. Jesus came to earth in A.D. 34 after his resurrection and taught them God’s Word. This was recorded on the golden plates. The descendents of Lehi’s two sons – Laman and Nephi – were all killed in a great battle against each other in New York (A.D. 385) except for Moroni, son of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is considered the true Word of God.

Doctrines and Covenants – More writings of Joseph Smith containing 138 additional revelations from God including those concerning baptism for the dead and the celestial marriage.

The Pearl of Great Price – Contains several additional works of Joseph Smith including the *Book of Moses* (his own translation of the first 6 chapters of Genesis); the *Book of Abraham* (a fraudulent translation of an Egyptian papyrus that teaches that the black race is cursed); extracts from his autobiography (the *History of Joseph Smith*), additional translations from the Bible and the *Articles of Faith*.

The Mormons base their beliefs almost entirely on the writings of one man – Joseph Smith – and that he sits at the right hand of God granting access to heaven. But we know that “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (*Acts 4:12*)

Lack of Validation

- No *Book of Mormon* cities have ever been located
- No ancient copies of the *Book of Mormon* have ever been found
- No mention of any person, city or nation in the *Book of Mormon* has ever been recorded or validated
- No record or proof of any ancient Christian or Hebrew inhabitants have been found
- There are numerous false prophecies in the Mormon religion and the *Doctrines and Covenants*
- The *Book of Mormon* has undergone numerous rewrites