

Jesus and The Mormons

Beginnings

1820, 14 year-old Joseph Smith had a vision that he would be the prophet to restore Christianity back to the "true church." 1823, Moroni told him where to find the golden plates (near Palmyra, New York) that would tell the story of the lost Israelites who migrated to America in 6th century BC and were visited by Jesus. 1827 the plates were found, 1830 published as the Book of Mormon. Eight other witnesses helped Joseph Smith translate plates. Unfortunately, after translation both the plates and the crystals through which to translate them were lost. Consequently, three of those witnesses later rescinded their faith and claimed it was all a hoax. (Further reading see Kingdom of the Cults, Walter Martin).

1838 - Name officially became Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
Moved from NY to Missouri to Illinois.

1844 - Smith and brothers instituted polygamy, were arrested and mob killed them both.

1847 - Brigham Young took over, split the denomination, most went with Young to Utah.

Who is God?

We believe in God the Eternal Father, and in His son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost (Articles of Faith, 1). This cannot rationally be construed to mean that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are one in substance and in person (Talmage, Articles of Faith, p. 40). There are three Gods...separate in personality, united in purpose, in plan, and in all attributes of perfection (McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 270).

God is an organized being just as we are who are now in the flesh. He is a progressive being, and possesses the capacity of eternal increase. Perhaps once a child and mortal like ourselves (Gospel Doctrine, p. 64, AF, p. 529, Journal of Discourses, 1:123). The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's (Doctrine and Covenants, 130:22).

God is not omnipresent...cannot be "physically present in more than one place at a time" (Talmage, DC, p. 48).

Every man who reigns in celestial glory is a god to his dominions (McConkie, MD, p. 322). There never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds (Young, Discourses, pp. 22-23). Each god, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters (Pratt, The Seer, I, no. 3, p. 37).

The doctrine of a plurality of Gods is prominent in the Bible. The heads of the Gods appointed our God for us (Teaching of the Prophet Jos. Smith, pp. 37072). The eternal Father is a progressive Being, capacity of eternal increase (Talmage, DC, p. 529).

Who is Jesus?

Among the spirit children of Elohim, the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ, to whom all others are juniors (Smith, CD, p. 70). By obedience and devotion He attained to the pinnacle of intelligence which ranked him as a God, even in his preexistent state (McConkie, MD, p. 192).

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Jesus Christ was the executive in the work of creation, aided by Michael (or Adam), Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, James, John, Joseph Smith, and others (McConkie, MD, p. 169). He was born of the virgin Mary. Elohim is literally the Father of the Spirit and of Jesus Christ, and also of the body (Talmage, DC, p. 466).

He is essentially greater than all others, by reason of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and an immortal, or resurrected and glorified Father. He died on the cross, rose again, and is coming again in power and glory to set up his kingdom on earth (Talmage, DC, p. 472).

What's the problem?

Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy (11 Nephi 2:25). Adam deliberately and wisely chose (to touch the forbidden tree) and partook of the fruit (Talmage, DC, p. 65). Adam cried, "Because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy" (Pearl of Great Price, Moses 5:1011). We ought to consider the fall of our first parents as one of the great steps to external exaltation and happiness (Mormon Catechism).

We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression (AF, 2).

What's the solution?

We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. The first principles and ordinances of the gospel are: Faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; repentance; baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost (AF, 3-4).

Even the unbeliever, the heathen, and the child who dies before reaching the years of discretion, all are redeemed by the Savior's self-sacrifice from the individual consequences of the Fall (Talmage, p. 58). Included are "beasts, fowls of the air, and fishes of the sea" (DC, 29:23-25).

They who believe not your words, and are not baptized in water in my name, for the remission of their sins...shall be damned (DC, 84:74).

Celestial marriage is the gate to an exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial world (McConkie, MD, p. 118). Those who attain the highest sphere, the Celestial, will "have spirit children in the resurrection, in relation to which offspring they stand in the same position that God our Father stands to us" (MD, p. 257).

Other Key Beliefs

Does it "feel" true? Unhealthy emphasis on "feelings."

Rocky relationship with culture - polygamy, white-middle class religion, no caffeine, alcohol, emphasis on "secrecy" the further in you go vs. family friendly, community service.

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GE's Talking Points

2 major difficulties face us:

- Common terms/language that mean very different things
- Mormons lack of a "baseline" understanding of God

Islam = God is Just

Judaism = God is Holy

Christianity = God is Love

Each baseline drives the rest of the system and the systems are congruent to themselves. They stay true to their basic, baseline understanding of God.

What would the Mormon baseline be? attainable? progressive? evolving? one of us? What this creates in Mormonism is "rubber-band" theology. It stretches depending on where you pull from. It's theology backwards, start in the middle and work both ways. Poor way of doing any kind of thinking/philosophy.

True Church

This is where most missionaries/mormons start - that the church needed to be reformed from its apostate place. LDS is the "True Church." Only way to salvation, baptized, worship - marriage, etc. This is the baseline.

So now, most of Mormon "Theology" is not about God at all but protecting and propagating the church.

The Clouds Around Jesus

A Mormon would agree that Jesus died, rose again for our sin. That Jesus was God's son. Would not say that Jesus was God, rather he grew into God - see Luke 2:52.

Tri-theistic more than Trinity. God, HS, and Son are 1 in purpose, not in substance.

John 1, Matthew, Mark, Col. 1 versus Luke 2:52

Quantity matters in theology. More verses slanted one direction gives that direction more weight in discussion. One verse does not a theological position make.

How To Read The Bible For All It's Worth - Fee and Stuart - for more info.

Salvation

Jesus + church + baptism + mission + marriage

Echoes of the Roman Catholic church from 1100 to 1600

- emphasis on only "true church"
- only place to be 'saved'
- only place to be married
- emphasis on Papal decrees over Bible
- church existed to protect and propagate itself, not Christ

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Further in you go into Mormonism - the less of Jesus there is. Lest we be too hard on the Mormons, how many Christian churches could that be said of as well?

Big Issues With Mormonism

Archeology

It may not prove my faith, but it doesn't undermine it either. Archeology has time and time again confirmed what was already in scripture - Jericho, Luke-Acts, Ephesus...

NO archeological proof of any of the historical claims in Book of Mormon. No artifacts supporting Jewish population in America from 6th century BC forward.

Extra-Biblical Sources

Josephus, Tiberius, Annals of Rome have historical references to Jesus. There are sources outside of scripture that confirm the details and context of scripture. (They do NOT reach the same conclusion that Jesus was God's son.)

NO extra-biblical sources for Mormonism.

Unhealthy emphasis on feeling

"Want you to pray about this and see if it feels right."

Matthew 4 - Temptations of Jesus. All temptations are Satan's attempts to get Jesus to make a decision based upon his feelings, not the promises and words of God. 40 days, in wilderness, hungry, he's the Son of God yet he's feeling exhaustion, hunger, aloneness, etc.

Hungry - make bread

Security - test God by throwing off pinnacle

Power - worship me, I'll give you what you deserve

Jesus responds to each one by reminding us that God's word, his promise trumps our feelings.

Jesus + ANYTHING

Anytime you add anything to Jesus, you are in a bad place. That means cross/resurrection wasn't enough to redeem. Bulk of NT is written to correct incomplete/incorrect theology of Jesus. Right out of the gate, Jesus + Jewish = salvation.

Most of Acts is written to show the exclusivity of Jesus. Most of Paul's letters are written to disprove the "additives" to Jesus. Jesus + knowledge, Jesus + hedonism, Jesus + Paul, Peter, Appolos, Jesus + festivals - all wrong and incomplete.

here to start?

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Baptism is...the very gateway into the kingdom of heaven, an indispensable step in our salvation and exaltation (Bennett, *Why I Am a Mormon*, p. 124).

Baptism by proxy for the dead is a major activity. "The Saints are...redeeming their (unbaptized) dead from the grasp of Satan" (Morgan, *Plan of Salvation*, p. 8).

The second sphere, the Terrestrial, will be inhabited by "accountable persons who die without law" or who "did not accept the gospel" or with LDS who "were not valiant" (MD, p. 784).