

## The Mormon Religion

[www.cvillechurch.com](http://www.cvillechurch.com)

### Introduction: Is the Church of Mormons the Church of Jesus Christ?

A. Frequently, the claim is made today by Mormons that their church is the church of Jesus Christ.

1. Commonly, Mormons pass out literature with pictures of Jesus and produce high budget films on the life of Jesus.
2. The obvious point being made is that **they** are the church of Jesus Christ. – ***But, are they really?***

B. Rather than take them at their word, Mormons challenge us to put them to the test to see for ourselves whether their claim is true.

1. In the book Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon by Orson Pratt (1850), one of the first apostles of Joseph Smith, we are given the challenge to examine the book of Mormon to see for ourselves whether or not it is from God: (Read from screen)

“This book must be either true or false... In a matter of such infinite importance no person should rest satisfied with the conjectures or opinions of others: he should use every exertion himself to become acquainted with the nature of the message: **he should carefully examine the evidences of which it is offered to the world**: he should, with all patience and perseverance, **seek to acquire a certain knowledge whether it be of God or not.**” (Introduction, page 1)

2. **If** their “latter day revelation” (the Book of Mormon) is **absolutely true**, would that then mean that they are in fact the church of Jesus Christ?
3. Is the Mormon Church the church that Jesus built? (**Mat. 16:18**).
4. It is indeed very important for us to examine this church, the book of Mormon, and their teachings *very carefully*.

C. Debate is good!

1. Scheduled to take place today is a debate between Mormon elders and one of our evangelists, Larry Rouse to answer the questions: “Is the Book of Mormon the word of God?” and “What will Eternal life be like?”
2. For many people, debate is thought to be a bad practice; an “un-Christian” thing to do that only stirs people up, causing fighting and strife.
3. Yet, in truth, debate is in actuality a **very good** thing when done with the proper spirit of love and good will.
  1. Debates can encourage people to examine all things, to seek the truth, and to never take their faith for granted.
  2. Debate is in fact a **God approved** activity, commanded by our Lord (**Jude 3**).
  3. Every Christian has a responsibility to **contend** earnestly for the faith of Christ, which involves a struggle and fight for the truth.
4. “What is truth?” Sometimes, people act like Pilate (**John 18:38a**) and believe we cannot find it.
5. Yet, for those who seek **only** the truth of God, debate is an important part of the struggle in determining right from wrong, truth from error.

D. The aim of this lesson on the Mormon Church is to help prepare us for this important debate by familiarizing ourselves with the concept of “Mormonism.”

## I. The Beginning of the Mormon Church.

A. Joseph Smith was the man who *claimed* to receive the latter day revelation known as The Book of Mormon.

**Note:** “The history of Joseph Smith” can be found in the book The Pearl of Great Price

1. Smith, while living in Palmyra, NY claimed he was visited by God and His Son Jesus in 1820 and a few years later by the angel Moroni in 1823.
2. In 1827, this angel gave Smith instructions where to find golden plates, which revealed a new or “latter day” revelation.
3. Received in the language of “reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics” (an unknown language that never existed), Smith then translated the plates.
  - a. Smith translated the plates by looking through a seer stone or set of stone spectacles or glasses which he dictated to a scribe.
  - b. During this process, Smith obtained sworn affidavits of eleven witnesses that testified that they saw and touched the golden plates.
  - c. Once the book was complete, Smith gave the plates back to the angel Moroni, the plates *never to be seen again*.
4. Smith published The Book of Mormon in 1830 and organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 6, 1830.
  - a. “Mormon” was the term used by Smith from the words “more” (English) “mon” (Egyptian) (good) for the name of the ancient prophet who originally wrote this revelation from God.
  - b. Thus, those who follow the teaching of this book are *Mormons*.
5. Smith claimed to receive many additional revelations of God including The Pearl of Great Price and The Book of Doctrine and Covenants (D&C).
  - a. These books were viewed as additional revelation needed to guide the church in its beginnings.
  - b. *All of these books are regarded as having equal or even greater authority as the Bible by Mormons.*

## B. The Book of Mormon

1. The Book of Mormon is believed to contain the history of the early settlers of America who migrated from the year 600 B.C. to 421 A.D.
  - a. These settlers are called the Jaredites, one of the groups of people who were scattered by the Lord from the Tower of Babel.
  - b. This colonization is viewed as a time of preparation for the *restoration of the gospel*, America seen as “the promised land.”

References: Ether 1: 33-43; 2-3; 6:1-18; Ether 2:12; 1 Nephi 13:12; 2 Nephi 1:6

2. This book is believed to be “Another Testament of Jesus Christ” that restores the “plain and precious parts” of the Bible that were removed by the “great and abominable church” (Catholic Church); 1 Nephi 13:26-28
3. Therefore, the Bible is viewed by the Mormon Church as incomplete containing error, a book that needs the illumination of The Book of Mormon to understand the truth.

## C. The Keys of Priesthood and Apostleship (D&C 13; 27:12)

1. According to Smith, during the when he translated the golden plates; the spirit of John the Baptist visited him and his scribe, Oliver Cowdrey.

2. John bestowed on them the *Aaronic Priesthood* giving them the keys of priesthood, they were then baptized, and they receive from the Holy Spirit the spirit of prophecy.

3. Later, the apostles Peter, James, and John appeared and conferred the *Melchizedek Priesthood* on them, restoring the same authority given to the original apostles of Christ thereby making them apostles.

4. Afterwards, Smith appointed apostles and organized and restored the church of Christ as it was in the first century.

5. “Apostles” today of the Mormon Church trace their authority to Christ by the ordinations that took place over the years beginning with Smith.

D. Today, there are many different Mormon sects (89).

1. Each of these different sects usually fall into one of two main groups: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints based in Utah or the Reformed LDS (The Community of Christ) based in Missouri.

a. A third, smaller group of Mormons is what is known as the “Church of Christ - Temple Lot” also in Missouri.

2. The main issue that divides these two groups is who has a right to serve as apostles today, who are the true successors of Joseph Smith.

3. The Mormon church out of Utah believe it was Brigham Young, the Reformed Church of Missouri believe it was Joseph Smith’s son.

## II. Major Beliefs Held by Mormons

A. God has a physical or material body.

“The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.” – **Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 130:22**

B. Faith in Christ, repentance, and baptism (immersion) for forgiveness of sins.

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel... We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: (1) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) Repentance; (3) Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; (4) Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.” – **Articles of Faith, No. 3 & 4, Joseph Smith**

1. Despite their correct teaching concerning faith, repentance, and baptism, it is highly questionable that they are baptized into the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, considering their view of a material God.

C. The belief we can have miraculous spiritual gifts today.  
“We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.” - **Articles of Faith No. 7, Joseph Smith**

D. Premillennialism (i.e., the belief we live in a time before the future 1,000 year reign of Christ upon the earth)  
“We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.” - **Articles of Faith No. 10, Joseph Smith**

E. “Marriage for Eternity” (requiring a plurality of wives?)  
1. Though rarely practiced today, a plurality of wives or polygamy is taught in the **Doctrine and Covenants Section 132**  
**61** And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else. **62** And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.

2. D&C 132 essentially teaches that one may have one wife for the here and now and another wife to be with for all Eternity to have children in one’s own eternal kingdom or world.

3. Eventually, “New revelation” was given to apostles declaring that polygamy is forbidden

a. In 1890, The Mormon’s fourth President (“Prophet”) issued the Manifesto declaring the discontinuance of the practice.

b. In 1904, the sixth President issued a second Manifesto against polygamy, prohibiting all members from practicing polygamy.

c. By 1910, the new policy was all members who had polygamous marriages after 1904 were withdrawn from or excommunicated.

4. However, some still practice it secretly today (Fundamentalist LDS).

F. To partake of the Sacrament (the Lord’s Supper) every first day of the week, using bread and **water**.

1. Originally, Smith and early Mormons used fermented or alcoholic wine in the sacrament.

2. In 1833, Smith claimed new revelation the “Word of Wisdom” (part of the D&C) that declares that the drinking of alcohol should be avoided for health sake.

3. In light of this and **D&C 27:2** which teaches “*It mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament*” Mormons began to use water instead of wine.

4. However, the Reformed LDS and other sects of Mormonism do use unfermented (non-alcoholic) wine instead of water.

**G. Eternal progression:** To obtain the co-equal position of godhood in Eternity.

"We believe in a God who is Himself progressive, whose majesty is intelligence; whose perfection consists in eternal advancement -- a Being who has attained His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow, whose glory it is their heritage to share. In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct charges of blasphemy, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: 'As man is, God once was; **as God is, man may be.**'" - LDS Apostle James E. Talmage, Articles of Faith, Ch.24, p.430 - p.431; **cf. D&C 132:20**

### **III. The Number One Obstacle of Fellowship: Agreeing on the Standard of Truth.**

**A. Jesus said that unity is based on the truth (John 17:17-23).**

1. If we cannot agree what truth is, then fellowship is **impossible**.
2. What then is the standard of truth?

**B. View of the Bible**

1. Christians believe the Bible to be the perfect and inspired word of God (**2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Thes. 2:13**).
2. Yet, Mormons believe the Bible to contain errors that need correction by the Book of Mormon and other latter-day revelations.

“We believe the Bible to be the word of God **as far as it is translated correctly**; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” – **Articles of Faith No. 8, Joseph Smith**

**C. Beliefs of latter-day revelation**

1. Christians believe the Bible to be complete, that when “the perfect” came, the completion of the revelation of Christ, spiritual gifts ceased (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**).
2. Christians, furthermore believe that there is not a succession of apostles, that only the original apostles and their teaching is the foundation of the church (**Eph. 2:20; cf. Acts 2:42**).
3. In contrast, Mormons do believe in latter-day revelations calling the Book of Mormon “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

4. Mormons believe that apostles are still living today, inspired by God.

“There are 15 Apostles living on the earth today. They make up the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church.” – [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org)

5. As long as there are differences in whether or not there are new revelations today, unity, or fellowship will **remain an impossibility**.

**D. We must abide in the doctrine of Christ to have fellowship with God (2 Jn 9).**

1. No compromise of the doctrine of Jesus Christ can be made if we expect to have fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus.
2. This is what we want for our Mormon neighbors and friends, to abide *only* in the doctrine of Christ as revealed in the New Testament.

**Conclusion: The Mormon Religion has yet to be proven to be the Religion of Jesus Christ. When We Take the Bible Alone, Only Then Can We Be Christians Only.**