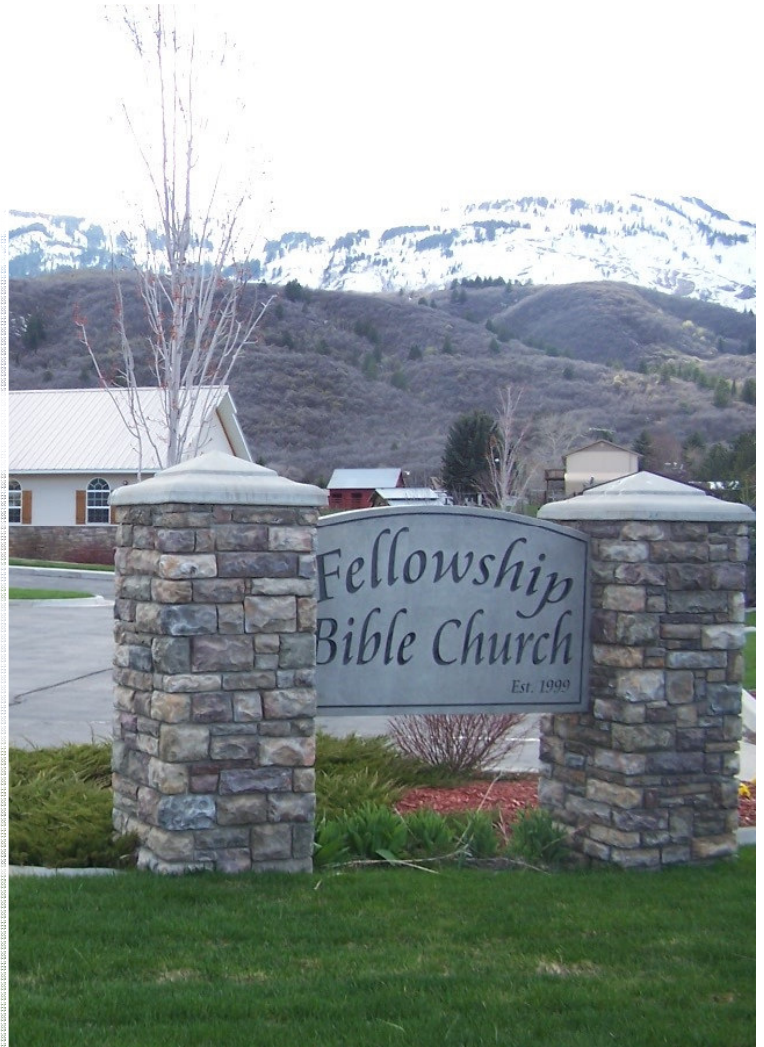


*Loving Our LDS Neighbors*

by Greg Baker

**Fellowship Bible Church**



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# Mormonism: a History

## *Beginnings*

### **Joseph Smith Jr.'s initial vision(s):**

In 1820, at 14 years old, Joseph Smith journeyed into the woods for a time of intense personal prayer in reaction to a local religious revival (likely conducted by Methodist preachers). Smith claimed that during his prayer-time, angelic beings appeared and told him not to follow any known Christian denominations. The angels, Smith confessed, warned that all modern Christian denominations had perverted Christ's true church (called *The Great Apostasy*). They further revealed that Christ would unveil His pure religious teachings to Smith alone. Notably, several versions of the *First Vision* exist. Church officials, however, accept only the 1836 version of the *Sacred Grove Experience* which has Smith visited by two angelic beings. The *Great Apostasy* remains a large factor in Mormon ideology and is perhaps a reason why non-denominational churches in the Salt Lake-area have seen more initial success than churches with traditional denominational monikers.

### **Smith's life from 1820-1827:**

Smith's parents, both members of the occult, practiced palm reading and fortune telling. Smith continued in his parents' trade and was eventually arrested in 1826 for fortune-telling and treasure hunting - he convinced people that his *Jupiter Talisman* or *Seer Stone* would find hidden treasure on their property.

### **1827-1830 - Creating the Book of Mormon**

After several angelic visitations Smith claimed that the angel Moroni, a descendant of the Nephites (supposed Jewish descendants who migrated to North America beginning in the 7th century BC), led him

to Cumorah Hill, a secluded location just outside Palmyra, NY. Buried somewhere on the hill were golden plates that contained histories of previously unknown Jewish descendants: the Jaredites, Mulekites, Nephites, and Lamenites. These documents purport to record events spanning 600 BC to 400 AD. Smith gathered the plates on his fourth visit to the hill and, along with the plates, later collected diamond-lensed spectacles and seer stones by which he could “translate” the *New Egyptian* language written on the plates. He dictated his translation to his wife, Emma. The translation process is variously told, but most sources recount that Smith buried his face in his hat and recited from the glowing plates. He later claimed to have destroyed the seer stones, the spectacles, and the plates upon the orders of Moroni, but allowed three witnesses to view them prior to their destruction.

## *Growth, Exile, and Split*

### **Organization of the Church of Christ (later added: Latter Day Saints):**

In 1829, one of the three witnesses of the golden plates, Oliver Cowdery, re-established with a baptismal ceremony what they called the *Aaronic Priesthood*. After forming the priesthood, adding another influential member, David Whitmer, and writing several other key documents like initial versions of the *Doctrines and the Covenants*, the early Mormon converts (about 70) moved to Kirtland, Ohio, where the movement added members and developed infrastructure (Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, First Presidency, patriarchs, high priests, Stake directors, etc). The movement quickly grew in light of their communal living and rapid birth rate (plural marriage secretly began in Kirtland). After running into local political issues in Kirtland (the surrounding communities were alarmed over Mormon block-voting), Smith claimed to have a vision that Christ would return in eastern Jackson County, Missouri (Independence). There, in Independence, the Mormons would build a Temple dedicated by Smith’s very own hand. This prophecy, however, has never, to borrow the most used phrase in the Book of Mormon, come to pass.

### **Life in Independence, MO:**

The fledgling group moved to Missouri in 1831 and many times were forced to relocate once local groups learned of their theology and practices. There were two great crises while in Missouri: the *Whitmerite Schism* and the *Mormon War of 1838*. After the *Mormon War of 1838*, Smith was imprisoned (for his own safety) while other Mormon refugees fled to Nauvoo, IL.

### **Life in Nauvoo, IL:**

Smith and other leaders escaped custody from the Missouri prison 1839 and rejoined the group in Nauvoo. There, Mormonism adopted some of its more controversial practices: mandated polygamy, baptism for the dead, endowment, and the Second Anointing. Also, Smith, the town’s elected mayor,



became politically active. While running for President of the United States, Smith raised a 5,000 man militia to protect his town. Smith later declared himself *Prophet, Priest, and King* of the Mormon church, an action which drew the ire of a growing group of church dissenters who grew increasingly uncomfortable with Mormon practices, especially polygamy. They published a newspaper called *The Nauvoo Expositor* to criticize their founder and his runaway power-grab. Enraged, Smith retaliated by destroying the paper and its printing press. The town's upheaval snowballed to the point that regional authorities had to restore peace. In the process, Smith was arrested and jailed in Nauvoo. That night, a vigilante group broke into the prison, shot Smith and his brother, Hiram, and then desecrated their bodies in the city's square. Mormon authorities often recall Smith's "martyrdom." Smith, however, is no martyr - he died while jumping out of a window. Before jumping, he emptied his six-shooter, wounding two.

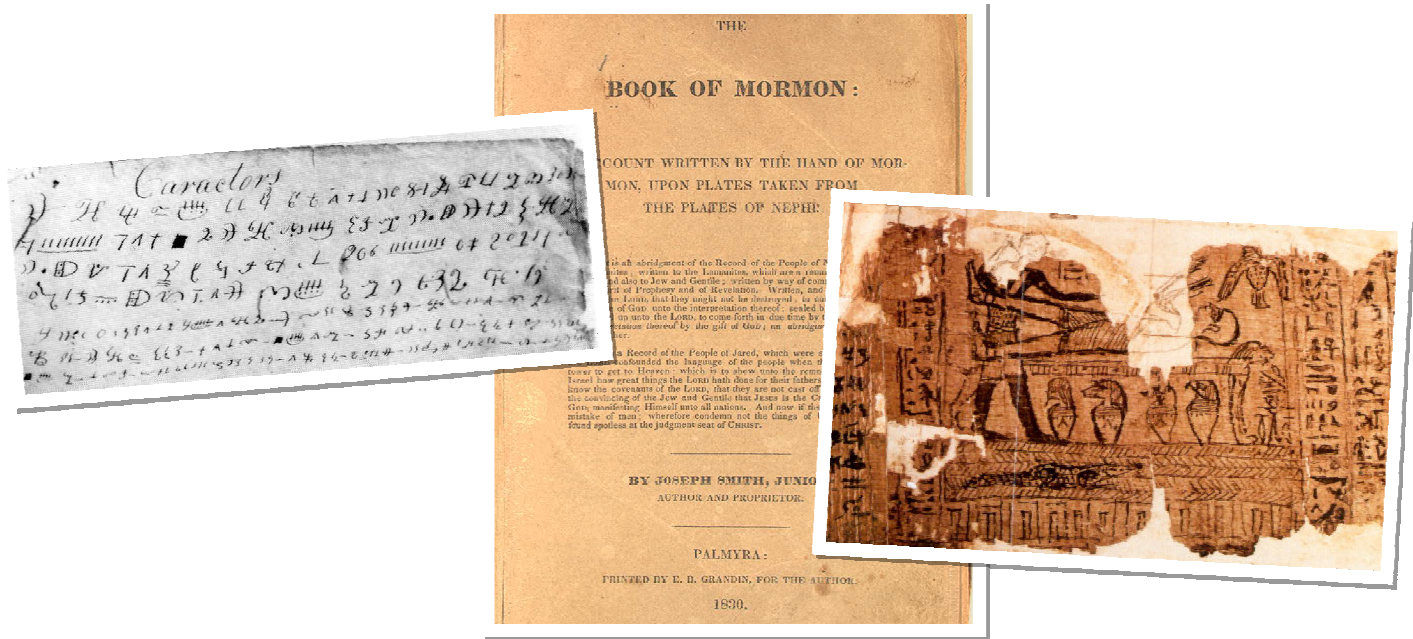
### **Crisis in Leadership:**

Smith's death created a crisis in succession. The group splintered into as many as twenty different entities, but the majority followed the *Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*, led by Brigham Young (the pro-polygamy party) and journeyed to Utah where they finally settled in 1847. The succession from Smith to Young provided the precedent for the transfer of Presidency leadership: the longest standing member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles succeeds the deceased living Prophet. Two groups are noteworthy. First, the group formerly known as RLDS (Re-Organized Latter Day Saints) now Community of Christ (as of 2000) followed Joseph Smith III and eventually landed in Independence, MO. This group was anti-polygamy from the start (Emma was never a fan) and were the original representatives of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. Second, the FLDS (Fundamental Latter Day Saints) broke away from the Salt Lake branch about three decades after arriving in Utah. FLDS traditionally practice plural marriage and do not permit negroes into the church's priesthood. The largest FLDS moved to Colorado City, UT in 1986.

### *Current Influence*

The current, mainstream LDS church boasts of 12 million members worldwide and is reported to possess assets of nearly \$6 billion in annual income through tithes and stock sales; LDS assets are at an estimated \$30 Billion. At last year's Semiannual Conference, the LDS President, Thomas Monson, announced the construction of five more Temples, with eleven others already in the works. Any financial numbers are unofficial figures leaked to media outlets - the LDS Church holds their financial information in strict secrecy. The modern LDS hierarchy steadfastly refuses to divulge even the smallest financial details. Mormon leadership has grown increasingly wary over the Wasatch Front's growing secularization. In response, the LDS Church is redoubling their efforts to Mormonize Utah - they are already dispatching growing numbers of missionaries to Salt Lake, Ogden, and the surrounding areas.





# LDS and Revelation

## *Mormon Canonical Literature*

### Book of Mormon

#### History:

In 1823, Joseph Smith, Jr. claims that the angel Moroni led him to Comorrah Hill just outside Palmyra, NY where Smith found additional Scripture. After several failed attempts to retrieve the documents, Smith finally passed Moroni's tests and located the buried documents in 1827. Smith claims he found a box containing three items: the golden plates upon which the Book of Mormon (BOM) was recorded in *Reformed Egyptian*, the *Urim and Thummim* (crystal/stone glasses used to "translate" the golden plates), and the *Sword of Laban* (a steel blade with a golden hilt that dated back to the 6th Century BC).

Over the next three years, Smith "translated" the writing on the golden plates. Smith dictated the book's story to his wife, Oliver Cowdery, and various other secretaries. To translate, he donned the *Urim and Thummim* spectacles and buried his face into his hat, which contained the golden plates, and dictated the text. Mormon historians disagree over how exactly the words came to Smith. Originally Smith said that the English translation appeared under the *Reformed Egyptian* characters. Later, he claimed that the words only appeared for a short time and, then, after his translation abilities improved, the words ceased appearing. Early Mormon leaders insisted that Smith had a literal, word-for-word translation of the plates that was perfect in every respect. Due to some embarrassment over grammatical errors, theological problems, etc, Mormon authorities now claim that God simply filled Joseph Smith's mind with the ideas and he then transmitted them to his secretary. Any errors, according to Mormon authorities, are due to secretarial or publishing errors. Mormons commonly claim that the original publisher deliberately

sabotaged the BOM (meaning Mormons must now fix the malevolent alterations). The original publisher, John H. Gilbert, however, secured a court-issued affidavit stating that he neither altered nor manipulated Smith's content, but printed the book exactly the way Smith presented it. For a full review of this history, see [www.bible.ca/mor-1830-changes.html](http://www.bible.ca/mor-1830-changes.html).

### **Content:**

The BOM tracks four migrations of Jewish descendants to the New World and their history in it. The supposed historical records span from 2247 BC at the first migration to the destruction of the Nephites in approximately 400 AD. Four different people-groups are featured: Jaredites, Mulekites, Nephites, and Lamanites. The Jaredites migrated first, immediately after the Tower of Babel. God allowed Jared and his descendants not to have their language and customs confused if they came to the New World. After crossing the ocean, experiencing several successes and failures throughout their time in the Americas, the Jaredites finally wiped themselves out in a civil war around 600 BC in a great battle at Commorah Hill. The second and third migrations were the descendants of three brothers, two of which banded together: Nephi (the Nephites) and Laman and Lehi (the Lamanites). These groups landed in the New World in approximately 600 BC and warred with each other throughout their existence. Typically the Lamanites tormented the Nephites, which resulted in God cursing them with progressively darker skin. Jesus visited the Lamanites at one point and converted them all to Christianity. For two hundred years they followed Christ and lived in harmony until they fell from grace forever. The Lamanites eventually wiped out the Nephites in the second battle at Commorah Hill.

A fourth group, the Mulekites, are discovered when the Nephites are forced to flee from the Lamanites. While on the run, the Nephites discovered the Mulekite capital, Zarahemla. Mulek was an unknown descendant of Zedekiah, the last prince of Judah who fled to the New World with his descendants and established Zarahemla. Zarahemla was also the refuge of a man named Coriantumr, who was the last known descendant of the Jaredites. He recorded the story of the Jaredites on a stone, which eventually came into the possession of Mormon, a Nephite descendant who fled to the city of Zarahemla. He supposedly edited the various sources into his own personal anthology, which later became the Book of Mormon. Mormon recorded his story on golden plates in Reformed Egyptian and, before his death, gave the plates to his son Moroni.

### **Problems:**

(1) **Contradiction with the Bible.** John 17:17 says that the Word of God is "truth." Psalm 18:30 declares that the way of the Lord is perfect, "the Word of the Lord proves true." Again, Psalm 19:7 says that the law of the Lord is perfect. In the NT, James says that the law is perfect (Mormons will often cite James 1:5 in an effort to get believers to doubt the veracity of the Bible). And Jesus says in Matthew 5:18 that "until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is

accomplished.” Yet, the BOM states that “plain and precious covenants have been taken away” from the Bible (1 Nephi 13:23-29). Keep in mind, many different doctrinal differences could be listed, but this is a very provable one that cuts to the heart of the debate

(2) **Historical Discrepancies.** The BOM is filled with anachronisms, that is, historical references that pre-date the historical use of the mentioned item. For example, the BOM mentions the following items as being in North America, none of which has any shred historical evidence predating their introduction by European settlers: horses, chariots, metallurgy, knowledge of blood circulation and hemispheres, chariots, bow and arrow, silk, wheat, barley, domesticated elephants, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and synagogues (which is especially interesting since the BOM usage predates their invention by the Jews themselves). Furthermore, not a shred of evidence exists proving the presence of vast people groups described in the BOM: sprawling cities, civilizations in the millions, wars, etc. For a full study, see [www.badarchaeology.net/forgotten/mormonism.php](http://www.badarchaeology.net/forgotten/mormonism.php).

(3) **Plagiarisms.** The BOM obviously plagiarizes from Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* (1823), Spaulding’s *Romance of the Bible* (1822), and the KJV. In fact, Smith plagiarizes even from the KJV’s translation errors (2 Nephi 14:5, compare to Isaiah 4:5; 2 Nephi 15:25, compare to Isaiah 5:25).

(4) **Changes.** The BOM has over 3,000 changes relating to doctrine. See [www.bible.ca/mor-1830-changes.htm](http://www.bible.ca/mor-1830-changes.htm).

(5) **Seriously??? Statements.** Several concepts reveal a complete ignorance of Bible scholarship: no BOM extant manuscripts (thousands of extant Bible manuscripts); 1-4 Nephi, etc (1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, etc. were not split until the 1500’s); *Reformed Egyptian* and Smith’s faux-Hebrew phonology; and ideology in the BOM that is very far removed from any Middle Eastern outlook, but views that are historically unique to 19th century New York state.

## **Doctrines and Covenants**

### **History/Content:**

The DC is a compilation of selected sermons or dictations - mostly by Joseph Smith, but others contribute, especially in later editions - originally published on 8/17/1835. The DC makes little attempt to categorize the material in any chronological or logical sequence. Thus, the DC is a scatter-shot document that touches on various topics ranging from the God-head to basic Ward government to natural phenomena.

### **Problems:**

(1) **Multiple Editions.** Aside from the extremely problematic theological issues, there are over 138 editions of the DC.

(2) **Deletions.** When analyzing the different deletions, one discovers that the church has deleted some of the more objectionable elements: polygamy, blacks not being able to hold the priesthood, etc.



(3) **False Predictions.** DC 84:1-5, 31 is a prophecy by Joseph Smith stating that both a city and a temple were to be built “in the Western boundaries of the State of Missouri and dedicated” by the hand of Joseph Smith. The revelation was given September 22-23, 1832. The prophecy states that this generation will not pass away until it comes to pass (DC 84:4-5). Several Mormon prophets re-affirmed that the temple and city would be built in western Missouri: 1864 (George Cannon), 1870 (Orson Pratt), 1900 (Lorenzo Snow), and 1931 (Joseph F. Smith). The temple and the city still have not been built. And Joseph Smith Jr. died long ago; his hand certainly will not dedicate it! See also DC 87:1-8 where Smith predicted that the American Civil War would bring war to all nations, earthquakes, lightening, and a full end of all nations. Mormon missionaries often brag that Joseph Smith correctly predicted the war would begin in South Carolina (not a huge surprise; Andrew Jackson correctly predicted it, too). Encourage them to read the whole prophecy!

### **Pearl of Great Price**

#### **Content:**

The Pearl of Great Price (PGP) has five sections: (1) *Book of Moses* (Joseph Smith’s “translation” of sections of Genesis); (2) *Book of Abraham* (Abraham’s supposed journey to Egypt); (3) *Joseph Smith - Matthew* (Joseph Smith’s “translation” of sections of Matthew); (4) *Joseph Smith - History* (account of Joseph Smith’s “First Vision” and other early Mormon historical accounts); and (5) *Articles of Faith* (thirteen affirmations early Mormon leaders drafted for their first public relations effort; they presented these precepts to the general public to prevent a violent reaction against their theology).

#### **Historical Problems:**

The major problem with the PGP is the history behind the *Book of Abraham*. In 1822 Antonio Lebolo discovered three Egyptian drawings on papyrus (vignettes) and eleven mummies. He brought them to New York and sold them to Michael Chandler, who later sold them to Joseph Smith. A scanned image of one of the three vignettes is pictured on the first page of this document. Smith “translated” the vignettes, which resulted in the Book of Abraham. Some of the vignette has been destroyed, which many scholars attribute to Smith’s doctoring as he attempted to craft a story. In 1873 an American pastor sent pictures of the three vignettes to renowned Egyptologists with Smith’s “translation.” Here are three of their assessments:

(1) **Dr. James Breasted, Chicago University**, “these three facsimiles of Egyptian documents in the *Pearl of Great Price* depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith’s interpretations of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrates that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization.”

(2) **Dr. W.M. Flinders of London University**, “It may be safely said that there is not one single word that is true in these [Joseph Smith’s] explanations.”

(3) **Dr. A.H. Sayce of Oxford**, “It is difficult to deal seriously with Joseph Smith’s impudent fraud.”

## *Mormon Living Revelation*

### **Revelation through the Living Prophet**

Mormons believe that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles receive direct Revelation from God. In recent years, Mormons have backed off their initial statements concerning the Prophet. Currently, prophetic revelation can only come when the Prophet speaks in conference and then those words are later printed in a Mormon publication. This caution, however, was not always the case. In the late 1890s, Apostle Wilford Woodruff said, “Whatever I might have obtained in the shape of learning by searching and study respecting the arts and sciences of men . . . , yet if the prophet of God should tell me that a certain theory or principle which I might have learned was not true, I do not care what my ideas might have been, I should consider it my duty at the suggestion to abandon that theory or principle” (Discourses, V, 83). Apostle Kimball wrote, “If Brother Brigham tells me to do anything it is the same as though the Lord told me to do it. This is the course for you and every other saint to take” (Discourses, I, 161).

Consider Luke’s statement about the Berean Jews: “these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the Word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

### **Individual Revelation through Emotional Stimulation**

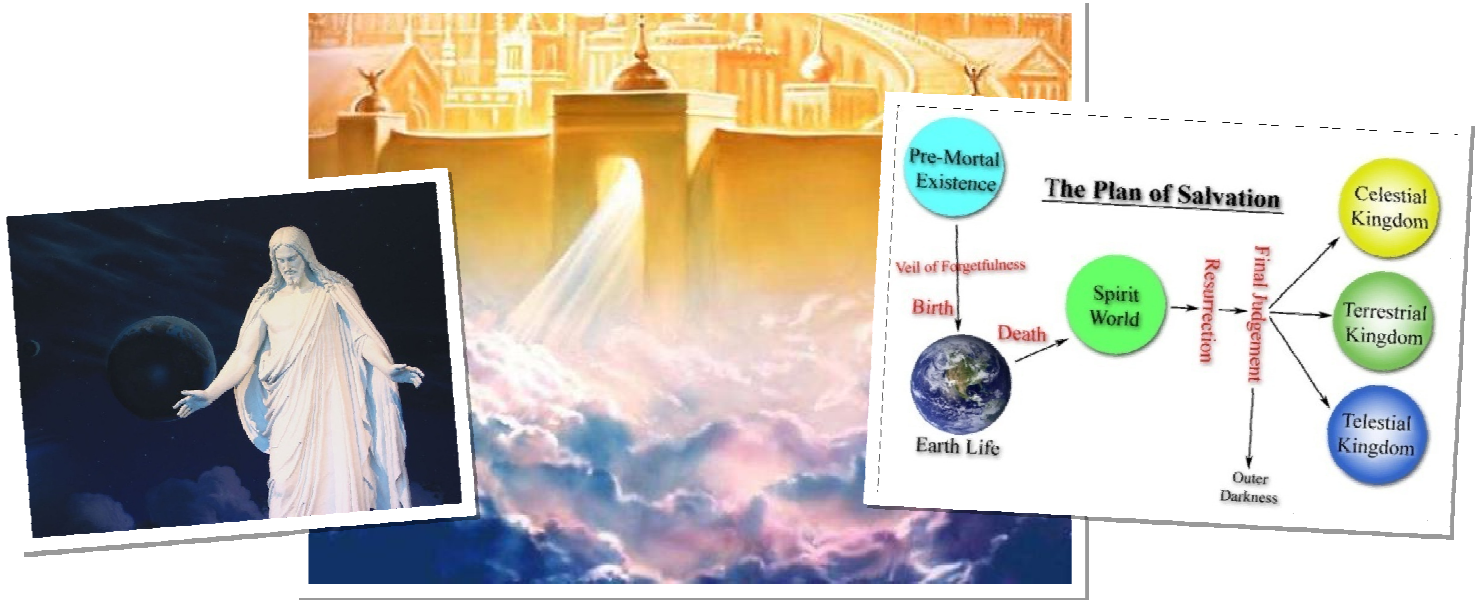
Mormons will often testify to the truthfulness of their doctrine because God gave them internal confirmation, a burning in their hearts, that the BOM and Mormonism are true. This concept is based on Moroni 10:4, “ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

Modern Mormon publications say it like this, “In answer to our prayers, the Holy Ghost will teach us through our feelings and thoughts . . . typically through feelings of their hearts and thoughts in their minds” (Preaching the Gospel, 2004, pg. 39). Mormon missionaries will often ask that an individual “pray sincerely and ask the Lord to confirm whether the BOM is true.” Notice the subtle manipulation: if one prays sincerely, God will give it.” In other words, if someone fails to receive the confirmation, it’s *their* fault for not praying sincerely enough. Mormons look to James 1:5 to prove this (see earlier comment on James 1:22-23). They will also quote Luke 24:27-32. After Jesus revealed himself to the two travelers on the road to Emmaus, they said, “were not our hearts burning within us?” Notice, however, that (1) these two already believed before they received the burning, (2) they were never encouraged to pray for that burning, and (3) the burning came as a result of Bible teaching, specifically OT teaching.

**The Thousand Dollar Question:** Is it biblically appropriate to pray whether the BOM is true? (1) Neither Jesus nor Paul, nor any other NT writer/preacher ever encourages their audience to pray if the message is true. They already knew and asserted it's truthfulness. (2) 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:3 affirms that the Bible is everything we need; we need no emotional experience to affirm anything! (3) Jeremiah 17:9 warns us not to trust our hearts, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick, who can know it?"

How should a Christian respond to a Mormon asking this question: (1) Have you ever considered Proverbs 28:26? "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." (2) Here is an appropriate prayer, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things from thy law" (Ps. 119:18). This prayer assumes the truthfulness of the Word and the Word alone. (3) Have you ever sincerely prayed that the Lord would tell you whether Mormonism is untrue? Have you ever sincerely and humbly and fervently prayed whether your faith is false? (4) How do you test the burning? There are documented cases where Mormon men murdered individuals because of the burning they received (in 1984 Ron and Dan Lafferty murdered a mom and her 18 month old child because of a burning they believed was from the Spirit). How can a Mormon definitively say their burnings were false? Once they say, "you have to test the burning by Scripture," they've lost the argument.





# Basic LDS Theology

## *Overarching Themes*

### **Progression**

Mormons believe that in the past eons of time the god they call Elohim, also known as Heavenly Father, procreated a finite number of spirit children with Heavenly Mother (or a harem of spirit wives). Of these celestial spirit-children, Jesus Christ was the firstborn and chief. These spirit children (of whom consist Jesus, Lucifer, the Holy Spirit, all angels, and all humans) were/are free moral agents with the ability to act righteously or to rebel. At some point, Heavenly Father, knowing that his spirit children could not themselves progress to godhood, decided to send them to earth so that they could inhabit earthly bodies, procreate (and thus provide earthly bodies for the remaining spirit children to embody), form families that would be sealed for all eternity, “gain knowledge,” and if they obeyed his ways, return to him to become gods of their own planets.

Before Heavenly Father finalized the *Plan of Salvation*, he called a council of all the other gods and other spirit children to pose a question: When the spirit children get to earth and sin, how will they return to heaven? Both Lucifer and Jesus presented plans to the council. Although Lucifer’s plan paved a way for the entire human race to return to Heavenly Father, human obedience was obligatory - Heavenly Father’s spirit children would lose the freedom to choose. The council concluded that neither Heavenly Father nor the humans themselves would garner any glory from Lucifer’s plan, but only Lucifer himself. Jesus’ plan, on the other hand, did not preserve the entire race, but only those who chose Heavenly Father’s ways.

Humans would retain free-moral agency, yet would also risk the chance of rebellion. The council ruled that Jesus' plan was superior because it preserved free-will and maximized Heavenly Father's glory. The council's unanimous acceptance embittered Lucifer, whose subsequent rebellion sealed his expulsion from heaven (a celestial body on or near a planet called Kolob).

### **Creation and Fall**

LDS theologians do not teach that Heavenly Father created the earth from nothing, but with the help of other gods and celestial beings, reorganized extant matter. After "creating earth," Heavenly Father sent Adam and Eve as the first earthly parents with two commands: (1) refuse to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and (2) procreate. Although Satan tricked Eve into eating the fruit, he did not lie to her: he told her she would gain knowledge and become as a god, all truthful according to Mormon theology. Adam, however, was not tricked; he knew Eve had disobeyed. She would suffer banishment from the garden and two kinds of death: physical (separation of spirit from body) and spiritual (estrangement from Heavenly Father). Thus, Adam faced a moral dilemma: obey the lower command not to eat and disobey the higher command to procreate.

Mormons believe Protestants err on this point: they teach that the fall was outside of the Protestant God's scope, that He was caught off guard by the fall, that He had a greater plan (sinlessness) and a lesser plan (Christ's redemption). Mormons believe that the Fall was always in Heavenly Father's plan and Adam executed the plan flawlessly. Adam had two commands: don't eat the fruit and procreate. Since Eve's expulsion precluded procreation, Adam chose to obey the higher command (procreate) by disobeying the lesser command (eating the fruit). He chose to join Eve's disobedience, share in her banishment from the Garden, and pave the way for men to attain godhood (remember: without mortal bodies, these pre-existent people would not be able to progress to godhood). Thus, Adam acted sacrificially: he not only allowed Heavenly Father to send his spirit children to earth so that they could procreate and allow more spirit children to come to earth, but allowed Jesus to execute his pre-temporal plan of redemption. Mormons commemorate Adam's great sacrifice at funerals by placing a fig leaf apron on the deceased.

### **Jesus and Salvation**

Jesus came to earth when Heavenly Father had actual, physical relations with Mary in order to conceive Jesus. Thus, Jesus was the spiritual and earthly offspring of Heavenly Father in every sense of the term. He was the only man to live a sinless life and, when his earthly ministry reached a pinnacle, atoned for man's sin in the Garden of Gethsemane when he sweat great drops of blood.

Christ's atonement has two universal, unconditional benefits for mankind: (1) It paid for Adam's sin (but not for the sins that we ourselves commit) - no human is held responsible for Adam's sin. (2) Every member of the human race will have his/her human body and spirit body reunited at the resurrection.

Christ's atonement also has conditional benefits: total forgiveness from sin and a reuniting with Heavenly Father, communion with the Holy Ghost, and many more. These gifts, however, are conditional and dependent entirely on one's repentance, pledge of faith, baptism, and faithful following of Christ's ways as taught by the LDS Church. Mormons, therefore, believe salvation is a mix of grace and works. They attempt to qualify for certain privileges through obedience, even though their obedience by no means obligates Heavenly Father to respond graciously. Mormons put themselves in a position to receive Heavenly Father's blessing through their obedience. Heavenly Father, out of his own good grace, sovereignly blesses only those who follow. Mormons also teach that Christ's atonement covers children who die before the age of accountability and/or the mentally challenged. The atonement also covers those who never heard the Mormon message, but would have accepted it had they heard it.

People who believe the Mormon message, follow its tenets, receive baptism in a Temple, and marry in a Temple qualify themselves for the highest heaven. Mormon individual eschatology anticipates three heavens: the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial. The telestial, the lowest heaven, is reserved for those who have rejected the Mormon message. The terrestrial is for Mormons who maintained connection with the Church throughout their lives, but were lukewarm in their pursuit. The Celestial, which also has three layers, is for those who believed and followed as they are told. These individuals only qualify themselves to become gods, create their own spirit race, and fellowship fully with Heavenly Father. Early Mormons also believed in a hell, which was for apostate Mormons, but the LDS church now teaches a form of annihilationism. Mormons believe that after every spirit child has lived his earthly life, God will resurrect the human race and reunite them with their spirit bodies. Once resurrected, everyone will face judgment and be placed in one of the three heavenly destinations (or Hell for Mormon apostates).

When people die, their spirits go to a post-existent holding state where they will hear Heavenly Father's gospel message a final time. If they accept that message, and if one of their family members receives earthly baptism on their behalf in a Temple, they, too, can land in the highest heaven.

### *Theology Proper*

There are several core Mormon teachings about God that wholly contradict basic Old and New Testament teaching. This document will highlight key doctrines and will list contradictory verses. Perhaps the most important element is Mormonism's soft polytheism (technically *henotheism*, many gods with one primary god). Mormons claim that there are a nearly infinite number of gods just like Heavenly Father, who himself also served a god at one time. Scripture, however, is overwhelmingly opposed to this notion: "Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me" (Is. 43:10); "I am the first and the last,



besides me, there is no god” (Is. 44:6); “I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God” (Is. 45:5).

Mormons also claim that Heavenly Father was a man before he became Heavenly Father. In fact, Mormons insist that Heavenly Father is still a man, simply a man who has progressed into godhood. The Bible unanimously affirms, however, that God has always been God and can never be anything but God. “God is not a man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind” (Numbers 23:19); “For He is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him” (Job 9:32); “for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst” (Hos. 11:9); and “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24).

Mormon missionaries attempt to declare monotheism by asserting that earth is a closed system, i.e. Heavenly Father is the only god of this planet/system. Thus, LDS missionaries casuistically profess faith in one god alone, Heavenly Father. Nevertheless, a question remains: how could God have more clearly proclaimed his exclusive existence? How could human language more accurately express true monotheism? The fact is, Mormon theology is not truly monotheist. For public relations purposes they deceive the listener into thinking they believe “like all Christians.” Their god is not the God of the Bible, but an invention of Joseph Smith and his followers.

### *Teaching on Jesus*

As with God, Mormons initially sound traditional concerning their teaching on Jesus Christ. Take, for example, Gordon Hinkley’s statement (Hinkley was a former LDS Prophet), “Members of the LDS Church pray and worship in the name of Jesus Christ. He is the center of our faith and the head of our Church. The Book of Mormon is Another Testament of Jesus and witnesses of His divinity, His life, and His atonement” (see [lds.org](http://lds.org) under “Basic Beliefs”). Consider, however, the Bible’s emphasis that Jesus is a part of the eternal Godhead and not a created being as Mormons claim: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1,3); “[God speaking of Jesus] But of the Son he says, ‘thy throne, O God, is forever and ever’” (Heb. 1:8); and “[alluding to Is. 44:6] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:13). Mormons likewise teach that Christ is a saved being, as Mormon theologian Bruce McConkie states, “Jesus Christ came to earth to work out His own salvation . . . . After His resurrection, He gained all power [i.e. He didn’t possess it before].” In fact, in *Mormon Doctrine*, McConkie states emphatically, “Christ is a saved being” (pg. 129). Isaiah 53:4-6 makes clear that Jesus died not for Himself, but for us and in our behalf. Jesus is God who came to seek and save that which was lost, not to save himself.

## *Teaching on Salvation*

Mormon theologians openly loathe the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. Former prophet James Talmage calls it “a most pernicious doctrine” and former prophet Joseph Fielding Smith says “mankind is damned by the faith alone doctrine.” Again, McConkie declares, “many Protestants erroneously conclude that men are saved by grace alone without doing the works of righteousness.” Former prophet Heber Kimball said, “I have power to save myself, and if I do not save myself, who will save me?”

Among many verses, two passages used in tandem are particularly powerful in refuting Mormons on this point. First, Paul says in Galatians 2:16, “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith, and not by works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.” Could language be more clear? Faith, not works, justifies. At this point, one should confront the Mormon with something Paul said earlier in the same book, Galatians 1:8-9. Twice here Paul says that even if he or an angel (Moroni?) preached a different gospel than salvation by faith, let him be accursed. Considering Mormonism’s history, this verse chain is a very powerful refutation.



# LDS Administrative Structure

## First President

- President + Two Counselors (First Presidency)
- Selected the Quorum of the Twelve through revelation (traditionally longest standing member of Q'12)
- 2 Counselors selected from Q'12 by President after installation
- All three considered Apostles, Prophets, Seers, and Revelators
- **Current President:** Thomas S. Monson
- **Role:** Run the whole show

## Quorum of the Twelve

- Consists of fifteen individuals: President + President's Counselors + the Twelve
- Typically promoted from the 70's Quorum, but could be any High Priest
- Selected by the First President per "revelation"
- All 12 considered Apostles, Prophets, Seers, and Revelators
- Lifetime appointment
- Function typically involves more international affairs

## The 70's Quorum

- Aka: The Seventies
- The 70's are an administrative layer bridging local levels (Stake and Ward) to the Home Base/Administrative levels.

- There are multiple Quorum of 70's (currently eight Quorum of 70's)
- First Quorum of the 70 is a Special Unit
  - General Authorities who retain apostle-like power when the President and Q'12 are not in session; generally high ranking people in the LDS church
  - Serve until they're 70 or health fails
  - Directly answer to the Q'12 and often accompany the Q'12 to meetings at stakes, wards, or conferences
- Second Quorum of 70's: serve only 5-6 years and in roles similar to that of the First Quorum (to be honest, I'm not real sure how they're different from the First Quorum)
- 3rd-8th Quorum of 70's
  - First layer of leadership who are not employed full-time by the LDS church
  - Not required to live near Salt Lake church headquarters
  - Primary function is to oversee Stake and Ward level functions in different regions of the world: Third oversees Africa and Asia; Fourth oversees Central and South America (Northern and Western portions) and the Caribbean; Fifth oversees North America West; Sixth oversees North America East, Midwest, and Southeast; Seventh oversees South America (Southern and Eastern portions); Eight oversees Asia and Pacific Islands.

#### **Local Level 1: Stakes**

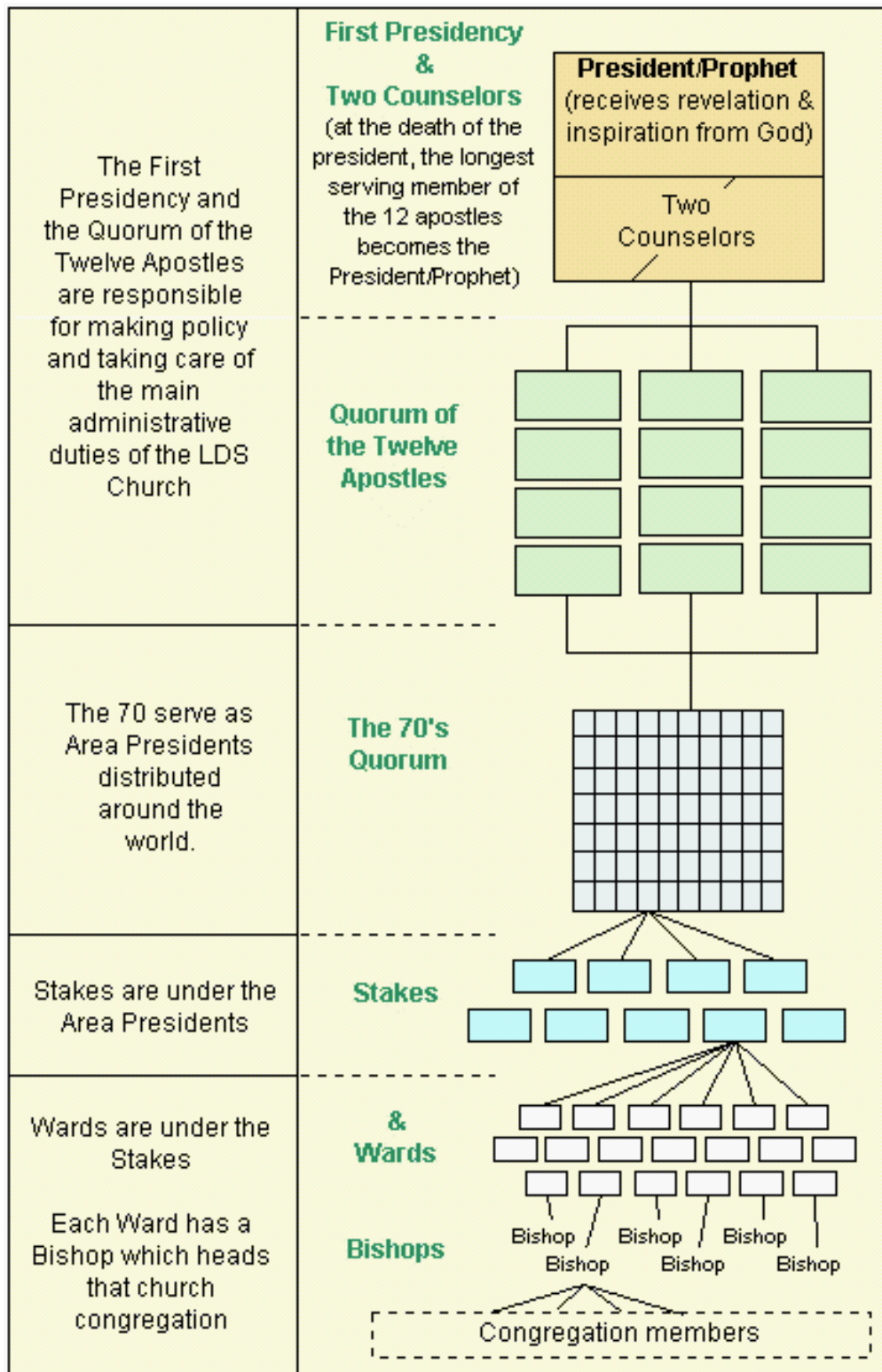
- Run by the Stake President and his two counselors
- Each stake ideally consists of 10-12 Wards, but in less proselytized areas of the world constitute a region.
- Each Stake has clerks, Primary Leaders (children's workers), Primary Boy Leaders (teens), Primary Girl Leaders, Relief Society Presidents and Counselors

#### **Local Level 2: Wards**

- Run by one Bishop and his two counselors
- Each Ward has President of Primary children, Young Men and Young Lady leaders, High Priest leaders, and Elders Quorum

**Note:** The layers of leadership noted above are merely basic levels. Within the LDS church titles abound in a nearly endless web. In fact, in reading Mormon literature, there are an abundance of abbreviations that are nearly impossible to understand even with the structure laid out here. For example of the preponderance of titles, note that in Mormon mission communities, they appoint Area Presidents, Mission Presidents, two Mission President Counselors, two Missionary President Assistants, zone leaders, assistant zone leaders, and district leaders.

*LDS Organizational Chart Visualized*





## LDS Priesthood Chart

<b>Aaronic Priesthood</b>	<b>Melchizedek Priesthood</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Re-instituted” in May 1829 during an angelic visit by John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, who were praying in the woods. Smith baptized Cowdery and then Cowdery baptized Smith.</li> <li>• Considered Lesser Priesthood, aka “Preparatory Priesthood”</li> <li>• Typically, Mormon boys are ordained into the <i>Aaronic Priesthood</i> at 12 where they receive the ordination through baptism and receive the office of <i>Deacon</i></li> <li>• Mormon converts over 18 are baptized after one year of examination into the <i>Aaronic Priesthood</i> and given the office of <i>Priest</i></li> <li>• Four Offices in <i>Aaronic Priesthood</i>:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Deacon</b> - typically taken at 12 with baptism and examination from the Bishop; given keys of angels; given small tasks in the Ward (collection of tithes, passing of sacraments, etc); <i>Home Teaching</i> with Father; begins <i>worthiness interviews</i></li> <li>2) <b>Teacher</b> - typically taken at 14; can home teach with any <i>Elder</i>; prepare sacraments</li> <li>3) <b>Priest</b> - typically taken at 16; may bless the sacrament; baptize; give others the <i>Aaronic Priesthood</i>; and ordain others to the offices of <i>Priest, Teacher, and/or Deacon</i>.</li> <li>4) <b>Bishop</b> -This is the highest office of the Aaronic Priesthood; even though categorized by Mormons in the Aaronic Priesthood, one must attain to the higher priesthood to be considered a bishop. Bishops run the local Ward with his two counselors; aka <i>Bishopric</i>; conducts <i>worthiness interviews</i></li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Re-institution” date is unsure; Smith was unspecific about details; most LDS historians place it at or prior to 1831. Again, Cowdery and Smith were conferred with the office, but this time by Peter, James, and John, who laid their hands on them.</li> <li>• Considered the Higher Priesthood</li> <li>• In the same ceremony, young men (typically 18-20) are ordained into the MP and then given the office of <i>Elder</i>; they retain the MP and the office for life</li> <li>• All Mormon missionaries have the office of <i>Elder</i> with the <i>MP</i></li> <li>• A third priesthood is called the <i>Patriarchal Priesthood</i>; Mormon authorities, however, debate whether it is its own priesthood or a subset of the <i>MP</i>. Joseph Smith said knowledge of the PP would be filled out at the completion of the Temple, but the Temple was never constructed; later Mormon authorities connect the priesthood with Celestial Marriage and the Patriarch’s ability to be a god of his own planet</li> <li>• Offices in <i>Melchizedek Priesthood</i>:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Elder</b> - Confer gifts of the Holy Spirit; give blessings through laying on of hands; ordain other <i>Elders</i></li> <li>2) <b>High Priest</b> - age is the key, usually over 30; eligible for higher calling (Bishop, Stake President, etc.); may ordain other High Priests</li> <li>3) <b>Patriarch</b> - gives Patriarchal Blessings to the people (identify one’s Israelite tribe, bless with knowledge, give advice)</li> <li>4) <b>Seventy</b> - see above</li> <li>5) <b>Apostle</b> - see above</li> </ol> </li> </ul>



# Life in the LDS Church

## *Worthiness*

*Worthiness* best describes the Mormon's ultimate goal. Personal worthiness factors into nearly every religious decision and, as we shall see, is a requirement for the religion's pinnacle experience: Temple attendance. *Worthiness* - often discussed, not often defined - refers to the Mormon's personal adherence to the doctrines and regulations of the LDS Church. Worthiness is something objective, something the LDS church member can attain. It is important at the outset to demonstrate how the LDS concept of worthiness and the Bible's teaching differ. The New Testament is emphatic: we can never be worthy in ourselves (Matthew 3:11; 8:8). Christ rewards a brokenness of spirit, an attitude that says, "I am not worthy of you." Christ condemns the person who believes himself worthy (Luke 18:11-14). LDS teaching misses a key NT concept: we are never encouraged to make ourselves worthy, but to act worthily. We are fallen, unworthy people seeking to live worthy of the gospel. Paul encourages believers to walk in a manner worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10). But making a person worthy is God's work: "to this end we pray for you, that our God make you worthy of His calling" (2 Thess. 1:11). Our own righteousness amounts to nothing (Is. 64:6). God's righteousness, which He imparts, transforms both objectively and subjectively.

## **Duty**

Worthiness demands constant attention to the duties the church requires. Several publications teach Mormons their duties: *Standards for Bishops*, *Pursuit of Excellence*, *Fulfilling my Duty to God*, *Basic Manual for Latter-Day Saint Women*, *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood*, etc.

*Pursuit of Excellence:* The LDS Church encourages members to excel in five areas: Spiritual, Intellectual, Physical, Service, and Character. Children are given a small booklet that guides them through faith projects so they can grow in these five areas. This booklet provides insight into to the LDS culture - religion is about growing, excelling, doing, and being righteous. The booklet embodies several trends: the preference of LDS extra-biblical material over the Bible, a tendency to live out one's faith by executing a religious plan, and the encouragement to report one's progress to a spiritual leader.

***Fulfilling My Duty to God:*** This booklet is for young men from 13-18 (the Aaronic Priesthood: Deacons, Teachers, and Priests.) It guides him through the teenage years so at the appropriate age he can accept the Melchizedek priesthood and, thereby, accept the missionary call. Common themes emerge: plan your faith, invent a faith project, get your plan approved by your parents or Quorum leader, and be diligent in the execution of your plan. The goal of the booklet is to prepare young men for a mission: it assumes they'll attend and encourages them to begin saving at an early age for the \$10K price tag. For example, a quote from page 84 is typical, "During your years as a priest, use the steps on the following pages to create a project that will help you prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and serve a fulltime mission." This section typifies many Mormon how-to guides: create a project that will instill certain values, execute your plan with diligence, and then report on your plan to your authority. The headings for this section are: Learn, Create a Project, Report Your Experiences (a fine summary of LDS life).

***Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood (Men):*** [Note: I purchased only Part A, a 278 page document that covers a broad range of topics.] Duties for LDS men focus on the home and family, especially teaching the family's religion, providing for their family's needs, saving necessary food stuffs, tithing, and accepting callings from the church. A huge emphasis is placed on the external: work ethic, budget, appearance, cleanliness, physical fitness, etc. Older men are considered Patriarchs who can dispense "patriarchal blessings." These are talked about often in Mormon circles. Say, for example, a Mormon lady has a doctor's appointment she's worried about. She can request a Patriarchal Blessing wherein the Patriarch lays his hands on her head and offers a prayer for the appointment. At that moment, Mormons believe that the Patriarch is being given direct revelation and can predict the future. If the Patriarch says the woman will be healed, she will be healed. Many Mormons experience guilt-ridden lives as a result of Patriarchal Blessings that went unfulfilled since they assume personal unworthiness prevented them from the Patriarchal blessing.

***The Latter-Day Saint Woman:*** This book [again, I purchased only Part A] is a catch-all book filled with advice and regulations for nearly every area of life. It covers everything from basic Mormon doctrine to immunization guides. For example, it outlines in specific detail how to stock-pile a year's supply of food,

how to cultivate a home garden (a prophetic requirement), and how to properly meet the family's nutritional needs.

My point is not to list all the requirements of the Mormon faith, but to demonstrate its tenor: Duty, Work, Responsibility, etc.

### **Sabbath Day Activities**

In years past, the Wards organized the service order so that members remained at church literally all day. Now Salt-Lake area Wards operate on a three-hour block rotation. Most Wards begin the first hour and fifteen minutes with the *Sacrament Meeting*. This worship service includes a challenge as written by the Home Office, hymn singing, and taking the sacrament (communion). The first Sunday of the month is *Fast Sunday*. On Fast Sundays the Sacrament Meeting is replaced with a Testimonial Meeting. There is no formal challenge, but members are encouraged to bear testimony for what the Lord has done for them. LDS members are encouraged on those days to fast for two meals, then contribute the cost of the two missed meals to the Ward's benevolence fund.

Following Sacrament Meeting, attendees split into individual sessions: children 0-18 months stay with their mothers (no nursery); children 18 months-3 years go to *Little Ones*, ages 4-12 attend *Primary*, 13-18 attend *Young Men/Women*; 18 and over ladies attend *Relief Society*, and men ages 18 and above attend *Priesthood*. Everyone 18 and under remains with their groups for two hours. Those over 18 attend a third and final 45 minute Sunday School session. The classes are instructional and divided, again, by age and gender. The Sunday School classes have a three-year topic rotation: Old Testament, New Testament, and the Book of Mormon.

Once a month on Sunday evenings, one particular group of the church holds a *Fireside*, which is simply an event for fellowship, fun, testimonies, etc. Worthiness interviews are conducted on Sundays, as well. Other weekly activities include: *Home Teaching* (men are assigned a family to visit, instruct, and report findings back to the Bishop - always Monday); *Visiting Teaching* (same as *HT*, but for women); *Young Men/Women*; and *Boy Scouts*.

### *Temple Attendance*

Temple Attendance is the pinnacle religious experience for the Mormon and the place where one must travel to receive the highest spiritual blessings: Endowment, Eternal Marriage, Baptism for deceased relatives, and Family Sealing. Basically, one cannot progress to the highest heaven if one does not attend Temple at least semi-regularly (LDS authorities encourage people with access attend at least once a month).

## Entering the Temple

Attending Temple activities is not easy. A quote from the LDS publication *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* illustrates, “We must be worthy before we go to the temple. There are restrictions and conditions set. They were established by the Lord and not by man. And, the Lord has every right and authority to direct that matters relating to the Temple be kept sacred and confidential. All who are worthy and qualify in every way may enter the temple, there to be introduced to the sacred rites and ordinances” (page 2). Before anyone can even enter the Temple, he/she must secure a Temple Recommend from the Bishop and the Stake President, which requires a “worthiness interview” at least every other year. There, bishops ask a series of 14 questions, but the four primary ones are: (1) Do you know the church to be true? (2) Are you tithing? (3) Are you sympathetic to any apostate groups? (4) Is there anything in your home life that runs counter to church teaching?

LDS Wards keep very close tithing records and more than one Bishop has threatened to check up on the honesty of one’s answers. Home Teaching times are reported back to the Bishop and filed; these often come up in worthiness interviews. Incidentally, tithing is a major issue. It is an important topic in every LDS publication as an expression of obedience and is almost always the first thing doubting Mormons jettison (even before the Temple Garments, which we’ll get to). Many are afraid that when they stop tithing, they’ll receive a rebuke from their Bishop or Stake President. Many Mormon communities have developed a culture of suspicion, distrust, and, frankly, gossip. Gossip is a very real fear; Temple Recommends might be withheld or confrontations might result.

Non-Mormons and people without Temple Recommends are by no means allowed inside the Temple complex. In fact, in the book *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*, there is an extended section on how to handle a family member who is not a member of the church. Many mothers and fathers have been greatly disappointed because their converted child would not get married in a place other than the Temple (if one gets married outside the Temple, he must wait two years for an additional Temple Sealing ceremony).

## Endowment

One’s first visit to the Temple is the Endowment ceremony where he/she gains full access to the covenant and secret rites. It is considered a rite of passage into greater Mormon blessings. Most Mormon young people participate in the ceremony sometime after they turn 18, but before they get married (required to be married in a Temple). Before 1990 the ceremony was extremely bizarre: personal discomfort and near nudity before others, graphic symbols of throat slitting and gutting, graphic portrayal of rejecting both Satan and the Christian Minister (played by live actors), and, of course, donning the Temple Garments for the first time. And even though they have since altered the ceremony, it is still uncomfortable enough



that many Mormons begin doubting their religion during the Endowment ceremony itself. At Endowment, Mormons receive their first pair of Temple Garments (*garmies* in Mormon parlance), which are undergarments to be worn at all times except to shower, change, etc. The garments are intended to be a constant reminder of one's covenant vows and to promote chastity/modesty (it's hard to wear a mini-skirt with your Temple Garment sticking out!). In Mormon culture, wearing sleeveless shirts to show one has abandoned his Temple Garment is a statement of rebellion against the church.

### Temple Sacredness

Mormons are sworn to secrecy with regard to Temple Ceremonies. Mormons believe that these rites were the identical ones used by King Solomon of the Old Testament. In reality, the endowment ceremony is nearly an exact replica of Masonic entrance ceremonies. Regardless, I have made it a point not to know what goes on in the Temple. If Mormons make a vow to keep it secret, then I respect that vow. But, Mormons are bound by conscience not to talk about their Temple experiences. And asking anybody to violate their conscience is a very risky spiritual game.

### *Mormon Missions*

#### Motivations

From very early in the young person's life, he is encouraged/expected to take a mission calling. Here are some of the common themes I've encountered while studying missionary motivations.

(1) **Rite of Passage:** Young men go off as boys and, supposedly, return as men. They've lived two years independently of their parents, in many cases are fluent in another language, and gain perspective that comes with traveling abroad. Gaining this rite comes with several advantages: it qualifies them to find a Mormon mate (certainly at the top of this list), job placement (missions look impressive on resumes anywhere, but especially in the Wasatch Front), and fulfills family expectations (many parents/grandparents save money the child's entire lifetime to finance their mission).

(2) **Obedience to God:** Despite Mormon denials to the contrary, it is commanded that every young man go on a mission. Missions are not just encouraged, but expected in nearly all church material. Yet, several young men want to obey what they believe is true of God. They want to "gain a testimony," in other words, receive some sort of proof that Joseph Smith is a true prophet and that the church is true. Mormons likewise believe that before the *veil of forgetfulness* was raised, they received marching orders while still in heaven. Many of them believe that it is part of their destiny, for the lack of a better term, to attend. Likewise, several young ladies go on missions because of their desire to help others. Young ladies proselytize less and, in general, perform more humanitarian activities.

(3) **Sense of Adventure:** Did you know what you wanted to do for the rest of your life at 18? Most Mormons don't, either. The mission provides an opportunity to live independently in some exotic place

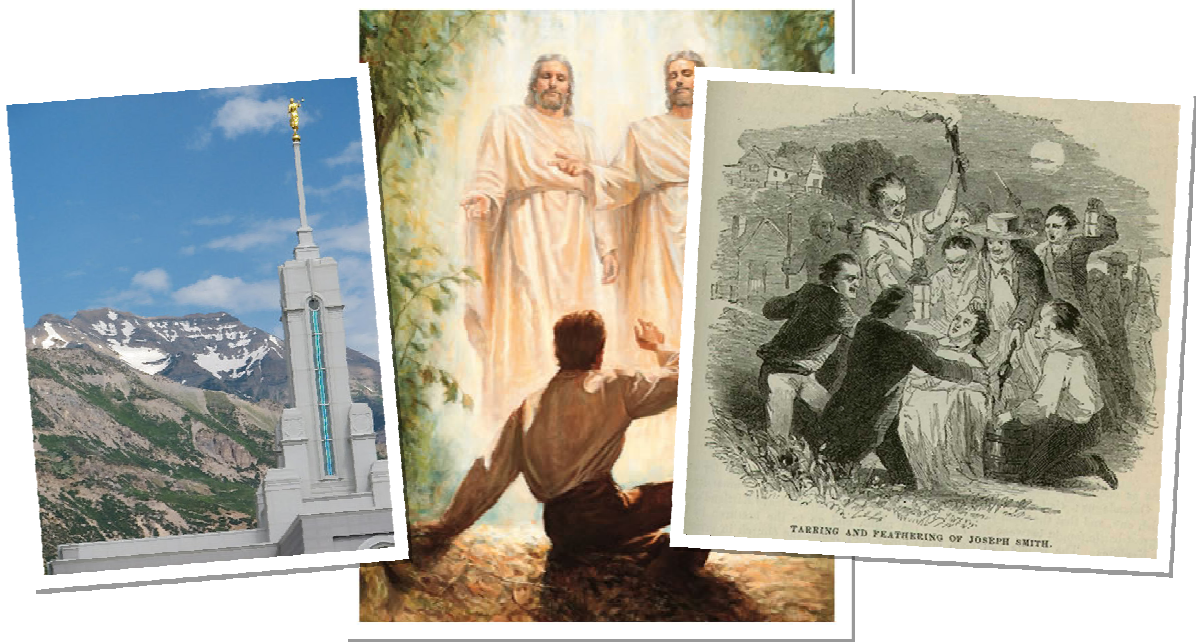
(hopefully - one never knows, Laramie, WY is a distinct possibility). But many young men either are searching for what to do or don't want to start life quite yet, so they take two years to attend a mission.

### **The Life**

Missionary life is tough. After the missionary-candidate gets the required approvals and fronts the \$10K, he spends the first eight weeks at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, UT (MTC) where he works 12 hour days and begins obeying all the missionary rules. He sees his parents one more time at the SLC airport for 15 minutes before he flies away to his new home for the next 22 months. Most missionary dorms are poorly furnished, are even more poorly stocked with food, and have few creature comforts. Missionaries are never, ever alone. They spend every waking moment with their missionary companion. Missionaries study their scriptures for two hours every morning, follow a very strict code of conduct, and proselytize for ten hours a day people who don't necessarily want to be proselytized. Failure to secure baptisms is blamed on the missionary's lack of faith, obedience, prayer, etc. Missionary life is much like other LDS activities: *Read LDS literature, set goals, make a plan, follow the rules, and execute the plan - in work you'll find happiness.* The rules are overwhelming for some missionaries. Interestingly enough, the first missionary rule is this: *Learn and obey all the missionary rules.* Among many other things, missionaries are never alone, never read or view materials without Church sanction, never leave dress-code, may not write family more than once a week, are subject to reduced daily stipend without warning or explanation, may not watch television/ listen to the radio or CDs, may not attend or participate in sporting events without permission, may not call parents, may not ride in a car with any non-church member, and may not purchase souvenirs.

### **How to Use This Document**

I have found this particular section to be most helpful in striking up meaningful conversations with my LDS friends. Telling humorous stories about a weird missionary companion, expressing the nervousness they felt before discovering where Church authorities have sent them, or relating the awfulness of the MTC all get my LDS friends talking about religion in a very disarming way - they don't feel threatened by those topics. Further, just being familiar with LDS concepts will earn you a hearing (it is a culture very unique to Utah) - Sacrament Meeting, Endowment for teenagers, family angst over Home Teaching, Worthiness Interviews, or worse, excluding a non-LDS family member from the Temple Marriage ceremony. All of these concepts are talking points where you can freely begin to talk about the free gospel of the New Testament.



# Witnessing to LDS Friends

## *Step #1: Establish the Bible's Supremacy*

### **Question #1: Do you believe the Bible is true?**

Trained Mormons usually answer, "I believe the Bible so far as it is correctly translated." Also, most Mormons will express confidence in the KJV. At this point, it is good to ask if they know of any incorrect translations. Although very few will list any objections, some may note differences between Matthew 27:5 and Acts 1:18's account of Judas's suicide. These passages are merely supplemental, not contradictory. Yet, it is important to establish that they are unaware of vast amounts of translation errors so that later in the conversation they cannot claim an erroneous translation that relates to an important doctrine. Try to find common ground - perhaps the red words in a red-letter KJV New Testament is a good starting point.

Some might quote 1 Nephi 13:23-29: several precious promises have been omitted from the Bible. LDS authorities taught that the Roman Catholic Church around the time of Constantine omitted sections of the Bible. (Rest assured, history is absolutely clear that this claim is patently false. Besides, the RCC did not exist when Constantine was alive!) You should not respond to that charge quite yet since you are attempting to find common ground. Ask them if they believe the words that haven't been omitted. In other words, even if items have been omitted, is everything there still true? If they balk at this question, you may want to quote Matthew 24:35, "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will not pass away." Simply see if they can agree with you that the Bible as it now stands is truthful.

### **Question #2: Which is more reliable, the Bible or your feelings?**

As we've learned earlier in this study, Mormons are taught to seek confirmation of truth by asking God for a burning feeling. LDS people typically avoid this question, but you must make them choose, "If you had to choose one or the other, which is more reliable?" Here are few verses that drive home the point, Jeremiah 17:9, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Proverbs 28:26, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." When typical Mormons encounter theological difficulty, they fall back on the burning feeling. It is important to cut off this escape route. Likewise, keep the conversation theologically black and white, as Mormons quickly run to mystery to avoid the spiritual entanglements their system weaves.

### **Question #3: When considering religious teachings, what should be the standard?**

Since attempting to prove theologically that the canon is closed can be a time-consuming conversation that likely gets you nowhere, and since most lay-Christians feel inadequate to delve that deeply, I would not make the canon an issue in these conversations. Your goal is to establish the Bible as a standard. Mormons believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God who communicated truth and gave the world more Scripture. We must use Scripture to test whether the Book of Mormon is indeed Scriptural.

*The Bible provides two tests for men who claim God has given them prophetic revelation:*

- 1) Later revelation will not contradict former revelation (Isaiah 8:20)
- 2) If a prophet makes a prediction, the prediction will come true (Deut. 18:20-22)

The writings of Joseph Smith must pass these two truth tests. If your Mormon friend disagrees with you, it is good to quote what other Mormon prophets have said regarding Smith's teachings: "If his claims to a divine appointment be false . . . the superstructure cannot be stable" (James Talmage, *Articles of Faith*); "If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, for the doctrines of an imposter cannot be made to harmonize in all particulars with divine truth (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, pg. 188).

At this point it may be appropriate to affirm that you will be reasoning and reading from the Bible - it is your divinely-given standard of truth. If any so-called revelation disagrees with the Bible or is proven historically false, then this revelation, according to the Bible, must be rejected.

### ***Step #2: Establish Central Mormon Tenants***

This step is extremely important as it allows *you*, not your Mormon friend, to establish the terms of the debate. If you ask in a friendly way, you can establish several points which you will revisit later. I have

found success in asking this question, “Would it be alright if I gave you my broad understanding of Mormon teachings? And if at any point I go astray, you correct me?” Every Mormon I’ve talked to agreed to this arrangement.

Here are the highlights you should hit, and I recommend this order:

- 1) The Mormon concept of God (once a man, progressed, we are Heavenly Father’s spirit children).
- 2) The Mormon concept of progression (God knew we could not progress unless we became corporeal; Adam’s choice between sin and procreation; and now man has the opportunity to progress to deity).
- 3) The Mormon concept of Jesus (was one of God’s spirit children; Lucifer’s brother who presented a better plan for man’s redemption; in Gethsemane atoned for Adam’s sin; provided resurrection for every human).
- 4) The Mormon concept of Salvation (if we have faith in God and Jesus and obey God’s laws as expressed in Mormon teaching, we, too, can progress - I would not delve too far into particulars, focus on salvation by works).
- 5) The Mormon conviction that Joseph Smith, the founder and primary Revelator of the movement, was God’s true prophet (you may want to review the Sacred Grove experience, the “translating” of the BOM; avoid saying anything negative about Smith’s character - sometimes saying things plainly highlights the absurdity).

Ask if there are any corrections. Remember, you want to keep it simple; you want them to agree with you.

### *Step #3: Demonstrate Incontrovertible Biblical Disagreement*

#### **Question #1: Is the God of the Bible the same as the God of Mormonism?**

God’s Nature: “God is a spirit” (John 4:24); “God is not a man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind” (Numbers 23:19); “For He is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him” (Job 9:32); “for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst” (Hosea 11:9).

God’s Uniqueness: “Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me” (Is. 43:10); “I am the first and the last, besides me, there is no god” (Is. 44:6); “I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God” (Is. 45:5).

God’s Eternality: “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17); “For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself (Hebrews 6:13; the implication being there are no other gods in the cosmos to swear by)



Conclusion: The Mormon God is different than the God of the Bible.

**Question: Is Jesus of the Bible the same person as the Jesus of Mormonism?**

Jesus is Eternal: “But unto the Son he saith, ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever’” (Hebrews 1:8).

Jesus is God: “Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever” (Romans 9:5); “the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Jesus is God’s Unique Son: (he cannot be Lucifer’s brother) “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14) [*only begotten* is probably better translated, *the one and only*).

**Question: Is the Gospel of the Bible the same as the Gospel of Mormonism?**

The Gospel According to the NT Writer Paul . . .

What is the Gospel? The gospel is salvation “to everyone that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

What do we need to be saved from? Sin and it’s penalty “for the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23a).

How does a person get this salvation? *It is a free gift*, “the gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23b); *the gospel cannot be earned, it is accepted by faith alone*: “not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy, he saved us” (Titus 2:5); “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16).

The Gospel According to Mormonism . . .

“We have to do our part to overcome spiritual death. To be forgiven our sins, we need to repent and increase our faith in Jesus Christ throughout our lives. We will not be saved simply because we get baptized or say we believe in Jesus. It takes work...” (from [www.lds.org/plan](http://www.lds.org/plan), accessed 1/27/2011).

“The new birth is also a matter of obedience to the law” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, pg. 189).

“For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all that we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel” (Pearl of Great Price: Third Article of Faith.”

## **Do Paul's Gospel and the LDS Gospel Agree? What Does Paul Say We Should Conclude If Another Gospel Disagrees?**

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: <sup>7</sup>Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup>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." (Galatians 1:6-9)

## **But what of Mormonism's emotional appeal, "Don't you want to live with your family forever?"**

A cornerstone of Mormon theology is celestial marriage. Mormons "seal" their eternal marriage with their partners in the Temple. This is not just an encouraged practice, but required to attain the highest level of heaven and then divine progression (DC 132:9-19)

## **What does Jesus say about marriage in the afterlife?**

"And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: <sup>35</sup> But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: <sup>36</sup> Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:34-36; see also Matthew 22:30 and Mark 12:25).

## ***Step #4: Demonstrate False Prophecies Made by Joseph Smith***

The Bible provides two tests for any doctrinal teaching or prophecy:

*(1) Does the teaching agree with existing Scripture?* In comparing the Bible's teachings on God, Jesus, and Salvation with Mormonism's teaching, the answer is no, they do not agree. In fact, Mormonism teaches an altogether different God, different Jesus, and different gospel (no small differences!)

*(2) Do the prophet's predictions ring true?* Let's examine some of Joseph Smith's prophecies to see if they were fulfilled. Remember, the Biblical standard is 100% accuracy.

A. DC 84:1-5, 31 is a prophecy by Joseph Smith stating that a temple would be built "in the Western boundaries of the State of Missouri and dedicated" by the hand of Joseph Smith - this region would be the New Jerusalem. The revelation was given September 22-23, 1832. The prophecy states that this generation will not pass away until "it comes to pass" (DC 84:4-5). Several Mormon prophets re-affirmed that the temple and New Jerusalem would be built in western Missouri: 1864 (George Cannon), 1870 (Orson Pratt), 1900 (Lorenzo Snow), and 1931 (Joseph F. Smith). The temple and

the city still have not been built. And Joseph Smith Jr. died long ago; his hand certainly will not dedicate it! See also Revelation 21:22 - there is no temple in the New Jerusalem.

B. DC 87:1-8 Smith predicted that the American Civil War would bring war to all nations, earthquakes, lightening, and a full end of all nations. Mormon missionaries often brag that Joseph Smith correctly predicted the war would begin in South Carolina (not a huge surprise; Andrew Jackson correctly predicted it, too). Encourage them to read the whole prophecy.

C. Demonstrably false statements (see earlier section on BOM historical discrepancies; multiple DC editions, and other demonstrably false statements made by Mormon Prophets).

***Mormon teaching fails both of Scripture's truth tests: (1) it does not align with existing Scripture and (2) prophetic statements have been proven false.***

It is extremely important not to take a judgmental tone in your discussions. Kindly speak with your friends - their religion is not under attack, it's simply undergoing Bible comparison. Remember, your conversation with them will likely be the very first time they've interacted with this evidence. You are telling them that everything they've learned religiously is a lie - be sensitive to that shock.

And above all, remember this - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). The gospel is powerful enough in itself to convert your LDS friend.