

**SPIRIT OF LIFE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL, INC.**  
**BIBLE SCHOOL SECOND EDITION**  
**SESSION 14: CULTS PART 3**  
**MORMONISM - ITS HISTORY AND WHAT THEY BELIEVE**

As we begin, let us look at this verse:

**II Timothy 2:23-26:** *“But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the Servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”*

**MORMON HISTORY:**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is distinctive among all the religious cults and sects active in the United States in that it has by far the most fascinating history, and one worthy of consideration by all students of religions originating on the American continent. The Later-day Saints as they are commonly called are divided into two major groups.

1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah
2. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with headquarters in Independence, Missouri.

Today, after nearly 200 years since its founding, the Mormons own considerable stock in the agricultural and industrial wealth of America. They circle the earth in missionary activities, energetically rivaling evangelical Christianity. The former group, which is the main topic of this study, claims a membership in excess of nine million. The Second group has nearly half a million members worldwide and has won acceptance in some quarters as a "sect of fundamentalism." They have over 50,000 "missionaries" active today. They are growing at a rate of 300,000 conversions a year. The average birth rate in the U.S is 15.09 per thousand although the Mormons average 28.1 per thousand. They are taught to preserve their bodies by being in the best of health, and are cautioned against the use of tobacco, alcohol, tea, coffee, caffeine drinks, such as Coca-Cola. They teach tithing. It is estimated that the Mormon Church collects about 4.3 billion dollars a year from its members plus half a billion from its many enterprises. Only a few Church officials know how it is spent.

<sup>1</sup>Information compiled from The Kingdom of the Cults by Walter Martin, 1997

<sup>2</sup>Taken from [www.allaboutcults.org](http://www.allaboutcults.org)

They are very involved in sports, hobbies, dramatics, music dances, dramatic festivals and missions. They have more adherents listed in Who's Who in America than any other one religious group and this holds true for scientific honors as well.

Mormon leaders have become powerful in almost all branches of American government from Governors to the Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of the Treasury. Far from being an organization of minor influence, the Mormons are indeed a potent political and social force to be reckoned with, a fact that few informed persons would doubt.

The seeds of what was later to become the Mormon Religion were incubated in the mind of one Joseph Smith Jr., ("The Prophet," better known to residents of Palmyra, New York, as just plain "Joe Smith."

He was born in Sharon, Vermont, December 23, 1805. His father, Joseph Smith Sr. was a mystic, a man who spent much of his time digging for imaginary buried treasure. Joseph Smith, Jr., participated in treasure-seeking and seer-stone divination and had apparently also used divining rods, talismans, and implements of ritual magic. His father, one of the Eight Witnesses to the divinity of the Book of Mormon, and later the church patriarch, had also participated in divining and the quest for treasure. (Quoted from the book "Early Mormonism and the Magic World View" by Dr. D. Michal Quinn) It is noted that Smith was interested in treasure-seeking even after he became president of the LDS Church and that "occult dimensions of treasure digging was prominent among the first members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, organized in 1835.

In 1820 Joseph Smith Jr. allegedly received a marvelous vision in which God the Father and God the Son materialized and spoke to young Smith as he piously prayed in a neighboring wood. The prophet records the incident in great detail in his book "The Pearl of Great Price". He reveals in this book that the two "personages" took a rather dim view of the Christian church, and for that the matter of the world at large, and announced that a restoration of true Christianity was needed, and that he, Joseph Smith Jr., had been chosen to launch the new dispensation.

The Mormon Church has always held the position that they alone represent true Christianity. Mormon leaders have consistently taught that after the death of the apostles, true Christianity fell into complete apostasy, making it necessary for a "restoration." It is interesting to observe that Smith could not have been too much moved by the heavenly vision, for he shortly took up once again the habit of digging for treasure along with his father and brother, who were determined to unearth treasure by means of "peep stones," "divining rods," or just plain digging.

Later in life the "prophet" greatly regretted these superstitious expeditions of his youth, and even went on record as denying that he had ever been a money-digger. The proceedings of a court hearing dated March 20, 1826 New York vs. Joseph Smith revealed that Joseph Smith "had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasure in bowels of the earth was and had looked for Mr. Stool several times."

The hearing ruled the defendant guilty of money-digging. Peep--stone gazing was one of several occult practices deemed illegal in the 1820's. That Joseph Smith's peep-stone gazing episodes met their challenge with the law is irrefutably documented. The original court bill of 1826, charging Smith with "glass looking" was discovered by Rev. Wesley P. Walters, in 1971. The crime cost Smith two dollars and sixty-eight cents which Smith apparently paid.

In 1820 Joseph Smith claimed a heavenly vision that he said singled him out as the Lord's anointed prophet for this dispensation, though it was not until 1823, with the appearance of the angel Moroni at the quaking Smith's bedside that Joe began his relationship to the fabulous "golden plates," or what was to become the Book of Mormon.

According to Smith's account of this extraordinary revelation, which is recorded in ***The Pearl of Great Price***, (Joseph Smith -history 1:29-54), the angel Moroni, the glorified son of one Mormon, the man for whom the famous book of the same name is entitled, appeared beside Joseph's bedside and thrice repeated his commission to the allegedly awestruck treasure-hunter. Smith did not write this account down until some years later, but even that fails to excuse the blunder he made in transmitting the angelic proclamation. This confusion appears in the 1851 edition of the Pearl of Great Price, wherein Joseph Smith identifies the messenger as Nephi, an entirely different character found in the Book of Mormon. This unfortunate crossing up of the divine communication system was later remedied by thoughtful Mormon scribes who have exercised great care to ferret out all the historical and factual blunders not readily explainable in the writings of Smith, Young, and other early Mormon writers. In current editions Moroni is identified as the nighttime visitor. However, whether Nephi or Moroni carried the message to Smith apparently makes little difference to the faithful.

In 1827 Smith claimed to receive the golden plates upon which the Book of Mormon is alleged to have been written. Shortly after this historic find, unearthed in the hill Cumorah, near Palmyra, New York, Smith began to "translate" the "reformed Egyptian" hieroglyphics, inscribed thereupon by means of the "Urim and Thummin," a type of miraculous spectacles, which the angel Moroni had the foresight to provide for the budding seer. During the period when Joseph was translating the plates {1827-1829}, one Oliver Cowdery, an itinerant schoolteacher, visited Smith at the home of his father-in-law {who after some months, for the sake of his daughter, had received Joseph into his home}, where he was duly "converted" to the prophet's religion and soon after became one of several "scribes" who faithfully wrote down

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what Joseph said the plates read, in spite of the fact that he and Smith were separated by a curtain during the "translation." In the course of time, Smith and Cowdery became fast friends, and the progression of the "translation" and spiritual zeal allegedly attained such heights that on May 15, 1829, John the Baptist, in person, was speedily dispatched by Peter, James, and John to the humble state of Pennsylvania with orders to confer the "Aaronic Priesthood" on Joe and Oliver.

This event is described in the *Pearl of Great Price*, following which Oliver baptized Joe and vice versa; and they spent time blessing one another and prophesying future events that would shortly come to pass." Smith was careful not to be too specific in recording these prophecies, because of the fact that more often than not Mormon prophecies did not come in on schedule, which no doubt accounted for Smith's hesitancy in alluding to details. When the translation from the plates was supposedly completed, the *Book of Mormon* was published and copyrighted in 1830. In that same year the prophet, with others founded a "new religious society" entitled the Church of Christ, later to be named the Church of the Latter-day Saints {1834}.

There was much controversy among the early group, but in 1830 the nucleus of the Mormon Church moved to Kirtland, Ohio, and in six years grew to 16,000 souls. They expanded it to Jackson County, Missouri, where they bought 63 acres of land and deemed it "holy ground" and experienced much persecution. Between 1831-1844 the "prophet" allegedly received over 135 revelations from God, to build Kirtland and later, the Mormon Metropolis of Nauvoo, Illinois. Smith's infamous practice of polygamy was instituted at Kirtland and later confirmed by "divine revelation." Some misinformed persons have declared that Smith was not a polygamist, but one needs only to search the famous Berrian collection in the New York Public Library for volumes of primary information that speaks of this outright immorality of Smith and the leaders of the Mormon Church. Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were placed in jail over this immorality. A mob stormed the jail and brutally murdered Smith and his brother, Hyrum. This made them look at Smith as a martyr. With his assassination the leadership went to Brigham Young, who was 43 years old, and they moved the church to Salt Lake City. In 1890 President Wilford Woodruff abolished this practice of polygamy in the Mormon Church.

In sharp contrast to the revelations of Scripture here are a few things that Joseph Smith taught. <sup>1</sup>

1. In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people in it.
2. God himself was once as we are, and now is an exalted man.

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3. The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as a man's: The Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones but is a personage of Spirit.
4. God's exist, and we had better strive to be prepared to be one with them. (Brigham Young)
5. As man is, God once was; As God is, man may become. (Lorenzo Snow)
6. Remember that God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child and mortal like we ourselves and rose step by step in the scale of progress.
7. Christ was the God, the Father of all things ... Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son (Mosiah 7:27 and Ether 3:14, Book of Mormons).
8. When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the archangel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS about whom holy men have written and spoken. HE is our FATHER AND OUR GOD, AND THE only God with whom we have to do. (Brigham Young).

One of their apostles, Apostle Orson Pratt, wrote in *The Seer* "In the Heaven where our spirits were born, there are many Gods, each one of whom has his own wife or wives, which were given to him previous to his redemption, while yet in his mortal state.

### **The Primary Differences Between Mormonism & Christianity**

#### **1. What Do Mormons Believe: Divine Authority**

The Mormon church uses two sources as its primary authorities: The Book of Mormon and the Bible. The Doctrine and Covenants and The Pearl of Great Price are also viewed as divinely authoritative.

**In contrast**, the Christian church (also called biblical Christianity) uses the Holy Bible alone as its authority from God (2 Timothy 3: 16). Joseph Smith is not recognized as a prophet.

## 2. What Do Mormons Believe: The Nature of God

The Mormon church sees God as the Supreme Being of the universe. However, He gradually acquired that position over a long period of time by living a perfect and righteous life. God the Father has a body (flesh and bones).

**In contrast**, the biblical Christianity proclaims God as eternally and infinitely supreme (Isaiah 44:6; Psalm 90:2). He is the same today as always (James 1:17). He is a spirit Being (John 4:24).

## 3. What Do Mormons Believe: The Nature of Man

The Mormon church teaches that humans exist as spirit beings before their birth. At physical birth, bodies are given to these spirits. They are also given an opportunity for free-will choice. The physical world represents a period of probation. The status of a person in the afterlife is determined by the way that person lived his/her life on Earth. If the person lived by a satisfactory standard, (including the fulfillment of Mormon temple obligations) that person has the potential to become a god in the after-life. The person can also produce "spirit children" to populate a world of his own (like God did with the earth).

**In contrast**, the Christian church holds that humans do not exist as spirits prior to being born into the world. Humans cannot attain godhood or populate other worlds with "spirit children."

## 4. What do Mormons Believe? The Nature of Jesus Christ

The Mormon church views Jesus and Satan as spirit brothers and sons of God. God put forth His plan of salvation for the world, and Satan proposed his own plan. Jesus accepted the Father's plan and offered to implement it as the Savior. The Father chose Jesus, and the spirit of Jesus was given a body through the virgin Mary. He was crucified on a Roman cross and rose from the dead three days later to establish His deity. The character and life of Jesus is attainable by anyone who performs at such a righteous level.

**In contrast**, biblical Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ has existed eternally as the Son of God, the second "person" of the Trinity (Colossians 1: 15-18; John 1: 1) Jesus took on human flesh about 2000 years ago and was born into the world through the virgin Mary (Luke 2). He was crucified on a Roman cross for our sins

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(Romans 5:8) and rose from the dead three days later to establish His deity (Mark 16:6; 1 Corinthians 15: 13-17).

## 5. What Do Mormons Believe: How do we Achieve Salvation

The Mormon church holds that Jesus Christ overcame physical death and guaranteed physical resurrection to all mankind. However, spiritual death can only be avoided through personal obedience of God's commandments. Forgiveness of sin requires faith, repentance and baptism by an approved Mormon priest. The practice of baptism for the dead is an extension of this belief, in which Mormons are baptized in proxy for those who have died without proper baptism.

**In contrast**, the Christian church teaches that we are unable to live a life righteous enough to meet God's perfectly holy standard (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23). Therefore, we establish a relationship with God by faith in the work of Christ on the cross, not by our own works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Baptism and good deeds are acts of obedience to God, but not the means for gaining eternal salvation.

## 6. What Do Mormons Believe: Life After Death

The Mormon church maintains that although there is temporary punishment for those that are most wicked, Jesus Christ will establish a new kingdom that will consist of three levels: the celestial kingdom, the terrestrial kingdom, and the telestial kingdom.

In contrast, biblical Christianity holds that there are only two possible fates after death, heaven or hell. These locations are final, both physically and spiritually (Matthew 25:46)

In conclusion we can see that those that follow the practices of Mormonism are following error. There are many in this cult that believe they are following truth. Many have joined Mormonism because of their adherence to a so-called "godly lifestyle" and their humanitarian deeds. Unfortunately, they are deceived.

Knowing what the scriptures say will give you an opportunity to share truth with those that have stumbled into this cult. Bringing one soul out of this deception of darkness will have a life changing effect on them. I pray that God will use you to be the one to do just that.