



What About . . .

Mormonism

The Rise of Mormonism

If anyone doubts that the Mormonism is a growing concern, just consider these facts. The Mormon church has grown from 2 million members in 1963 to 9.7 million members today with “stakes” (as they call their districts) in 160 different countries. In the United States alone there are approximately 5 million people who claim to be Mormons, Latter Day Saints (LDS)!

As we express our deep concerns about the anti-Christian nature of Mormonism, it is important that we recognize that many Mormons are fine people, with high moral values and deep devotion to their family. The sincerity of the Mormon people is beyond question. But, they are sincerely wrong—very wrong—about the true God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Mormonism is an anti-Christian cult that uses many of the same terms as Christianity, but gives them entirely different meanings. Mormonism bases its religion on the *Book of Mormon* and the “inspired” revelations of its leaders, rather than on the Holy Bible, which *alone* is the Word of God.

The Beginnings of Mormonism

Joseph Smith Jr., the founder of Mormonism, claimed that an angel had visited him and led him to discover plates of gold upon which was engraved, in what he called “a reformed Egyptian language,” the *Book of Mormon*. Smith gathered all his various documents together in 1833 into what Mormons today refer to as the *Doctrine and Covenants* (abbreviated D.C.). This is the source of their religion.

Unlike the Holy Scripture, there is not a single shred of verifiable, archeological evidence to support the *Book of Mormon’s* fantastical claims of ancient civilizations and epic battles here in the Western Hemisphere. Even the claim of a “reformed Egyptian” language has been proven time and again to be a myth.

After Smith’s death in 1844, the largest group of his followers accepted the leadership of Brigham Young and migrated to Salt Lake City, Utah, the present-day headquarters of the LDS.

Mormonism’s Key Beliefs

“Restorationism” is the most important principle for the Mormon Church. It is their belief that the true church died with the first generation of apostles and was restored with Joseph Smith. The Mormons are experts at using terms

familiar to Christians, but giving them different meanings. Let’s take a moment now to examine a few key teachings of Mormonism.

The Holy Trinity

An official statement from the Mormon Church claims: “A paramount doctrine . . . is a belief in God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost. The three make up the Godhead. They are one in purpose but separate in being.” (LDS Internet site). This sounds very similar to Christianity, but a study of what Mormons mean when they use words like “god-head” is very revealing.

Mormonism rejects the Holy Trinity. The key to the Mormon doctrine of the Trinity is found in the words, “one in purpose but separate in being.” Joseph Smith wrote, “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” (D.C., 130:22).

Mormonism explicitly denies the God revealed in the Holy Scripture and the God confessed by all true Christians through the ages. Matt. 28:19 reveals that the Triune God consists of three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God is three persons, equal in their divinity, yet one God. They are not separate, but of the same divine essence.

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Many Mormons today hold that God the Father had sexual relations with Mary to produce a body of flesh for Jesus to live in. But some say that Brigham Young was “inspired” when he wrote that the Father of Jesus “was the first of the human family, Adam. . . . Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in heaven” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. I, pp. 51, 51).

Obviously, since Mormons do not believe in the Son of God as He is revealed to us in the Bible, they also reject what He has done for us, namely, paid for all sins with His death on the cross. It is therefore no coincidence that you rarely, if ever, see a Mormon painting of the death of Christ. The crucifix is particularly offensive to Mormons. Why? Because they believe that the blood of Jesus Christ did not atone for all of our sins.

Salvation

What about Mormonism?

Holy Scripture teaches clearly that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, apart from works (Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8-11). In contrast to Christianity, Mormonism teaches that salvation is not a free gift of God, but something to be earned. A person may earn this salvation by believing in God, by receiving baptism by immersion, and then by fulfilling required works. Mormonism expressly rejects the doctrine of justification by faith alone. One of their “apostles,” James Talmage wrote, “The sectarian dogma of justification by faith alone has exercised an influence for evil since the early days of Christianity” (*Articles of Faith*, 1909, p. 120).

How does a Mormon believe a person is saved? A Mormon theologian puts it this way: “Without the *Book of Mormon* and other latter-day revelation, Christians are left without a full understanding of . . . Jesus Christ. This same Jesus Christ, God of the Old Testament and Redeemer of all, has once again benefited humankind by restoring the same teachings, principles, ordinances, and organization that he first brought to the world two thousand years ago” (Rex Lee, *What Mormons Believe*, p. 24-25).

Mormonism teaches its followers that they must do certain things to gain heaven. Since they reject the true Son of God, Jesus Christ, they can never have the assurance that they are saved by the love of God, revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Mormon church officially states: “The Purpose of Life” is the following: “All have the potential of eternal life, conditional upon individual worthiness and obedience to the Savior’s ordinances and teachings.” How tragic!

How Can We Reach Out to Mormons?

We need to approach this challenge with the attitude that it is God alone who converts a person to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. We are merely God’s instruments and our calling is to speak the truth *in love* (Eph. 4:14). We know from God’s Word that we are to be prepared to “give an answer” to everyone who asks about the hope we have in Christ (1 Pet. 3:15).

Based on the observations of those who have spent many years living and working among Mormons, here are some practical suggestions for witnessing to Mormons. It is important not to get into arguments with Mormons. As we defend our faith, we must always do so lovingly and with compassion, never merely for the sake of scoring debating points.

When we witness to Mormons, we need to be careful that we base our understandings of Mormonism on reliable sources. An excellent resource is available from Concordia Publishing House. I highly recommend the helpful booklet, *How to Respond to . . . The Latter-day Saints*, by Pastor Edgar P.

Kaiser. You may obtain a copy from CPH by calling 800-325-3040. The best thing we can do is to share with Mormons God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ. We need to emphasize the powerful comfort we have knowing that God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to provide, totally and completely, for our salvation. We do not have to look to our own efforts for our salvation. The Mormon Gospel is only a new law. The true Gospel is the good news of God’s work in Jesus Christ, which atones for all sin. The bottom line in witnessing to Mormons is to be aware of the fact that our job is to witness to our faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the one who converts a Mormon through God’s Word. Finally, pray that the Lord would bless your words as you present the hope that is within you. Pray too for the Mormon with whom you are speaking, asking that the Lord would break through the fog of error that clouds his mind so that he may come to know who God really is and what His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, is really all about.

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