

Lesson 5 –An Overview of Mormonism
A Study of Religions Beliefs
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Introduction: I have often heard “testimony” from Mormons that “Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and the Mormon church is the one true church.”

A. Mormonism is a rapidly growing religion all over the world. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the official name of the religion commonly called the Mormon Church. It was established April 6, 1830 by Joseph Smith, the first president of the Church. We believe he was called by God to be a prophet in the modern era, like Moses and Abraham in biblical times. Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ in a vision after praying to know which church to join. They called on him to restore the church Christ organized when He was on earth, with the proper organization and priesthood authority that had been lost shortly after the Savior’s death.

From the original six members in 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ has grown to a membership of nearly 14 million on six continents. After Joseph Smith’s death, an unbroken succession of prophets have led the Church, always striving to bring members to a better understanding and greater love for the gospel of Jesus Christ. – www.mormon.org

B. The claims of Joseph Smith must be examined and either accepted or rejected.

I. How does God want us to test a man who claims to be a prophet of God?

A. God expects all Christians to rely on what has already been delivered! **(1 Thess 4:1; 3:6)**

1. As Christians, we start with the resurrection of Christ and come to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. **(Rom 1:3-4; Lk 24:44-49)**
2. The resurrection of Christ is connected to the work of the apostles. Jesus promised that their work would never pass away. **(Jn 16:12-13; Mt 24:35)**
3. How can we know what is false and what is true? **(1 John 4:1-6)**

B. If the new prophet contradicts what has already been delivered, he must be rejected.

1. The Bible commands in both Old and New Testament to test those who claim to be a prophet. **(Deut 13:1-5; Mt 7:15; Gal 1:6-9)**
2. Does Joseph Smith pass this test?

II. The Claims of Joseph Smith

A. Joseph Smith claimed to be led by an angel called Moroni to golden plates from which the Book of Mormon came from.

“The **Angel Moroni** an angel that Joseph Smith, Jr. said visited him on numerous occasions, beginning on September 21, 1823. The angel was the guardian of the golden plates, which Smith said were buried in a hill near his home in western New York, and which he said were the source material for the Book of Mormon.” - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel_Moroni

B. Joseph Smith also claimed to have seen both the Father and Son in human form:

In the spring of 1820, Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home and knelt in prayer. He described his experience: *“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me [...] When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other-This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”* (Joseph Smith-History 1:16-17).

This vision of Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ was the beginning of Joseph Smith's calling as a prophet of God. He was told that none of the churches on the earth had the fullness

of truth. Over time, Joseph Smith was chosen to establish Christ's Church and restore the priesthood, or the authority to act in God's name. He was led by God to an ancient record and given the ability to translate it into English. This record is called the Book of Mormon. He continued to pray and receive revelation for the Church throughout his life. These revelations were compiled into a book of scriptures referred to as the Doctrine and Covenants and shows that God still leads His children today. Joseph Smith formally organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 6, 1830.

C. We can test the writings of Joseph Smith and compare them with the Bible!

Bible	Book of Mormon
Church began in 33 AD Mt 16:18 Acts 2	church began in 147BC, Mosiah 18:17
"disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" 40AD, Acts 11:26	Alma 46:13-16 supposedly written in 73BC refers to Nephites as Christians.
Jesus is only head of church Col 1:18	Joe Smith is head of Mormon church D&C 28:2-6
"Jesus was born in Bethlehem" Mt 2:1 + Mt 21:17	"He shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem" Alma 7:10
3 hours of darkness at crucifixion Lk 23:44	3 Days of darkness at crucifixion Hel 14:20-27
God is spirit without flesh & bones Jn 4:24; Lk 24:39	God has flesh and bones like man: D&C 130:22

<http://www.bible.ca/mor-contradictions.htm>

D. Is the Book of Mormon really a history?

The Book of Mormon mentions: wheat (**Mosiah 9:9**), horses (**1 Nephi 18:25**), chariots (**Alma 18:9-11; 20:6; 3 Nephi 3:22**), cows (**Enos 21**), elephants (**Ether 9:19**), silk (**Alma 1:29; 4:6; Ether 9:17**), linen (**Mosiah 10:5; Helamon 6:13; Ether 10:24**), money-pieces of gold and silver (**Alma 11:3-20**), steel (**2 Nephi 5:15; Jarom 1:8; Ether 7:9**). None of these items were here before the Spaniards.

1. The next edition of the Book of Mormon will have a word change to accommodate the evidence that contradicts its claims. (See recent Daily progress, "Book of Mormon word change stirs debate among faithful, AP Press, P A6)
2. What a contrast to the Bible! (**Lk 1:1-4**)

III. How did Joseph Smith view the Bible?

A. Article of Faith number 8 – "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God."

1. Please notice that the Book of Mormon is accepted unconditionally while the Bible is accepted with conditions!
2. The Mormon Church does not want you see Joseph Smith's inspired version of the King James Version!

B. Is Bible all-sufficient? (**2 Peter 1:3**)

"Wherefore, because you have a Bible you need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need you suppose that I have not caused more to be written." **2 Nephi 29:10 see v3-6**

C. Have parts of the Bible been lost and altered through the ages? (**2 Peter 1:23-25**)

"The foundation of a great and abominable church (i.e. Mormons say Catholic church), which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious. And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men. Wherefore, thou seest that after the book (i.e. the Bible) hath gone forth

through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book (i.e. the Bible).” **1 Nephi 13:26-28**

(Also see <http://www.bible.ca/mor-view-bible.htm>)

D. As we will see later, no written revelation has power in Mormonism. They will give greater emphasis to a direct leading of the Holy Spirit.

IV. How do people become Mormons?

A. The power in Mormonism is their appeal to a subjective experience. Our society is filled with this kind of ‘proof.’

1. Consider the person who saw “Jesus” on a hospital door in Jasper years ago.
2. Consider the young lady who saw the “virgin Mary” in a cow pasture in Shelby County years ago.

B. Mormonism and Subjective Religion.

1. They claim a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. (**Moroni 10:4-5**)

4 And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall 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. 5 And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

2. They appeal to feelings and experiences as evidence. (**D.+C. 9:8**)

8 But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. 9 But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me.

3. They give personal testimony of their private experience.

4. Plain statements in the word of God are denied. (**2 Nephi 29:10**)

“Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.”

C. This appeal is commonly used by men.

1. If there is no foundation, what will be the result? (**2 Peter 2:18-19**)
2. Note the appeal for money. (Ex. Oral Roberts, Radio DJ)
3. Sadly, I have seen Christians run to this as a reactionary religion.

D. Does the Bible Tell Us to Follow our Feelings?

1. I do not deny that people have experiences. But should we follow them?
2. If a man claims an experience should I believe him?
3. Consider the Prophet of **1 Kings 13**
 - a. God gave him plain instructions. (**1 Kings 13:8-9**)
 - b. The other man appealed to his “experience” (**1 Kings 13:18**)
4. Should we follow an angel? (**Gal 1:8**)
5. If feelings are our guide, who then is right? (**1 Cor 14:36-37**)

V. The Mormon View of God

A. If you only looked in the book of Mormon you would understand there is only one God from all eternity. (Moroni 8:18; Mormon 9:9)

Moroni 8:18 - For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.

Mormon 9:9 - For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

B. The Mormon view of God evolved during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Here is their present view of God.

1. They believe that their God was once a man who went through a process they call "eternal progression" and became a God.

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

God is not a uniquely eternal being. All spirit is self-existent matter and is eternal (without beginning or end). Such "matter (called intelligences) sometimes becomes organized into a spirit being through birth to celestial parents. Then that spirit is born through human parents on earth. Like all people, God took this course and eventually reached Godhood.

God would stop being God if intelligences stopped supporting him as God.
(D&C 93:29, 33; Abraham 3:18-23; Mormon Doctrine, 1977 ed. p. 751)

2. They believe than any Mormon can one day be like God and bear spiritual children in heaven that will one day be sent to another planet. There are many gods.

"How many Gods there are, I do not know. But there never was a time when there were not Gods. - Brigham Young-Journal of Discourses 7:333

3. They therefore believe that Jesus was once only a man and progressed to become a God. Satan was his brother in heaven before he rebelled!

C. The Bible teaches that there is only one God. (**Deut 6:4; Isa 43:10; 45:5; 46:9; 1 Tim 2:5**)

1. God is not, nor has ever been a man. (**Nu 23:19; Hosea 11:9**).
2. God the Father, the eternal God is Spirit (**Isa 55:8-9; 6:1-5; 57:15; Ps 90:2; 113:5-6; 123:1; Jn 4:24; 8:23**)
3. Jesus said that a spirit does not have flesh and bones (**Lk 24:39**)
4. God the Father has always been God! (**Isa 43:10; 44:6; 45:5, 21; Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13**).
5. God has been God "from eternity to eternity." (**Psalms 90:2, 93:2**)
6. Jesus was and is Almighty God and created the universe. (**Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2**).

D. What kind of "heaven" does the doctrine of "eternal progression" bring?

"Each God, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters; indeed, there will be no end to the increase of his own children: for each father and mother will be in a condition to multiply forever and ever. As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits, and his Heavenly inheritance becomes too small, to comfortably accommodate his great family, he, in connection with his sons, organizes a new world, after a similar order to the one which we now inhabit, where he sends both the male and female spirits to inhabit tabernacles of flesh and bones. Thus each God forms a world for the accommodation of his own sons and daughters who are sent forth in their times and seasons, and generations to be born into the same. The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and worship their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited" (The Seer, p. 37).

"Sin is upon every earth that ever was created, and if it was not so, I would like some philosophers to let us know how people can be exalted to become sons of God, and enjoy a fulness of glory with the Redeemer. Consequently every earth has its redeemer, and every earth has its tempter; and every earth, and the people thereof, in their turn and time, receive all that we receive, and pass through all the ordeals that we are passing through" -- Bingham Young (Journal of Discourses 14:71-72).

1. How can this be heaven? (**Rev 21:4**)
2. Imagine seeing the overwhelming majority of your children fall into darkness and be lost!