

Evangelism and Other Religions Part 4: The Latter Day Saints 5/21/23

Introduction

- 1) The year was 1820. A family had moved to the Manchester, New York, western New York b/c of failure to experience a good crop in Vermont, in the Year Without a Summer
- 2) A young teenage boy, about 14 years old, +/-, was reportedly praying in a wooded area near his home. He was confused about the different denominations and he turned to Jas 1:5, where it says to pray and ask God if you lack wisdom
- 3) He writes: immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction" (Pear of Great Price, History, 1:15).
- 4) He writes: "But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction – not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being – just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me." (POFP, 1:16)
- 5) This was the time, Smith says, that God the Father and Jesus Christ together appeared to him, told him his sins were forgiven, and said that all contemporary churches had "turned aside from the gospel."
- 6) One interesting note, this was during the time when the supposed 2nd Great Awakening was in full gear; and, "religious enthusiasm" was common
- 7) Then, in 1823 at the age of about 17, this same teenage boy reported the following: "While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor. He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen.." (POGP, 1:31-32)

- 8) He goes on to write that the angel's name was Maroni, and: "He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants.." (POGP, 1:34)
- 9) The contents on the plates were then, supposedly, translated, and the Mormon Religion was invented... Fast forward many years
- 10) The Church of Latter-Day Saints is no longer an obscure religion confined to a small following across the west and mid-western United States.
- 11) As of 2018, the LDS faith claims over 16 million followers across 176 nations and territories, with some 67,000 missionaries.
- 12) At the close of 2018, there exists 161 temples, with 11 currently under construction, and 29 new ones recently announced.
- 13) Temples pepper the landscapes of North and South America. And there are more across the globe from places like Finland, France, and Fiji, to Tonga and Taiwan, and Japan, Sweden, Australia, and across Africa.
- 14) Despite the rate at which it has grown, Mormonism contains fatal doctrinal problems. Though it has attracted many, it cannot be said that adherence to it will lead one to heaven.

**Here are a few reasons why Mormon doctrine cannot save:

1. Mormonism cannot lead you to heaven because it departs from the sufficiency of the Bible.

The LDS faith teaches that the Book of Mormon is sacred Scripture, being "another testament of Jesus Christ." It possesses equal, if not greater, authority as the Bible, and is, therefore, the word of God.

Mormonism holds that Joseph Smith discovered the Book of Mormon as a teenager in its original form in Manchester, New York on a hill called Cumorah.

The book was recorded on gold plates long ago in an ancient Egyptian-type language. In 1823, Joseph Smith claimed to have been directed by the angel,

Moroni, to discover and translate the contents, which became the Book of Mormon.

Mormonism teaches that Smith was a prophet like Moses and Isaiah, chosen by God to restore the true Church of Jesus Christ using the text from the plates.

The content of the Book of Mormon rejects the idea that the Bible alone is the sufficient word of God: "Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible" (2 Nephi 29:6).

Along with the Book of Mormon and the Bible, Mormonism affirms the canonicity of two other works, The Doctrine and Covenants, and Joseph Smith's work, The Pearl of Great Price.

New revelation is also permitted, which, similar to papal authority in Roman Catholicism, can arise from the Prophet, or President of the Church.

This violates the clear teaching of the sufficiency of Scripture: "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar" (Prov 30:5-6; cf. Deut. 4:2, 2 Pet. 1:3, Rev. 22:18-19). Since it imposes an entire book onto the word of God, the LDS faith is on extraordinarily shaky ground.

2. Mormonism cannot lead you to heaven because it departs from the biblical teaching of the triune God.

LDS adherents insist that they believe in the God of the Bible. The language on God and Christ in the LDS faith appears nearly identical to that of biblical Christianity.

Mormon doctrine claims that Jesus is the Son of God, Savior, and Redeemer who died for us. However, there are fateful differences between the God of Mormonism and Christianity.

Mormon teaching denies one of the most important biblical teachings, that God is a Triune God; one God and three Persons, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Instead, the Persons of the Trinity are said to be three separate gods. That difference is catastrophic: it teaches polytheism, not monotheistic tri-unity, as Scripture does.

Further, God the Father is said to be an exalted man who "...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" (Doctrine and Covenants, 130:22).

The Father was once a mortal being who dwelt on earth and eventually ascended to his current god-like status. This puts the LDS god no higher than an exalted man.

Mormonism teaches that he is the father of human spirits (before creation, all humanity were spirits who lived with God the Father), among whom were Christ and the Holy Ghost.

- This is a different God altogether than the God of the Bible. It's a God who is less than the eternal, immutable, infinite God, and thus, no god at all.
- The true God, however, was never a mortal being, but eternally an immortal, immutable, and triune Being with no beginning or end (Job 36:26; Ps. 90:2, 93:2, 102:25-27).
- For that reason, the god of Mormonism is an idol and a false god.
- Consequently, he is a god who cannot accomplish true redemption and in whom there is no salvation. To believe in a god different than that of Scripture is to adhere to an unsavable system.

3. Mormonism cannot lead you to heaven because it teaches a false view of the Person and deity of Jesus Christ

Similar to the LDS view of God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit are beings whose god-like status was something that became rather than something eternally possessed.

By virtue of being children of God the Father, like all human spirits, they ascended to their status of deity.

Like Christ, humanity has the potential to work themselves into this god-like standing. This results in a different Jesus than that of Scripture; one who is less than eternal God, and, therefore, no God at all.

Mormonism violates the clear teaching of Scripture that, among other things, Christ is God; the uncreated, eternal, second Person of the Triune Godhead, who

has eternally possessed all the attributes of God (John 1:1-2, 8:58, 10:30; Col 2:9, Titus 2:13).

The Jesus of LDS teaching is also an idol, and thus devoid of any saving power. No one can get to heaven through this Jesus both because he is impotent and fictitious.

4. Mormonism cannot lead you to heaven because it departs from the true gospel of Jesus Christ

As with the deity of Christ, the wording on salvation appears similar to biblical Christianity. However, any belief that deviates from the deity of Christ thereby espouses an unsavable Christ and a false gospel (Gal. 1:8-9).

Tragically, this is a Jesus who cannot save. Since he is not truly God, he cannot be the sinless God-man who does not possess Adam's sinful nature (Rom. 5:12, 1 Cor. 15:22).

Since he is not the sinless God-man outside of Adam's condemned line, his death cannot effectually atone for the sin of one sinner.

The eternality and sinlessness of Christ are essential to his saving ability (Heb. 7:24-27).

Mormonism speaks of the atonement, but with such a Jesus, it is fictitious. Since this Jesus cannot atone for sin, not one person who puts faith in him will be forgiven, justified, reconciled to God, and go to heaven.

And since this Jesus is not the true God-man, he cannot rise from the dead, notwithstanding Mormonism's assertion of such a thing. Thus, no one can go to heaven through the LDS Jesus.

A Christ who is not the eternal God of the Bible cannot effectually save and propitiate sin for men who are not sinless.

A being who is not the God of Scripture, whether having ascended to divinity or not, is unable to ascend to a moral finesse necessary such that his substitutionary death would be sufficient to placate the wrath of God for sinners (Heb. 7:26-27, 1 John 4:10).

Humanity is depraved. Unless we have an individual who is truly God and truly man, humanity remains under the wrath of God because no created individual

can arise out of Adam to atone for our sin. This, sadly, is another point where Mormonism is void of any saving power.

Furthermore, since Christ is not the eternal God of the Bible, the justice of God in forgiving sinners is called into question.

If God the Father is going to justly justify the unjust, then he must do so through the biblical Christ. Christ must be eternal God or we may not have eternal life.

Mormon doctrine teaches that atonement is made effectual in our lives through faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and choosing to follow Christ's teaching for the rest of our lives.

LDS article 1:3 teaches that, "Through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (emphasis mine).

This is a direct contradiction to the way to heaven taught in the Bible. In addition to an unsavable Christ, this is a works-based righteousness, which contradicts the teaching of Scripture (Rom. 3:20, Gal. 2:16, Eph. 2:8-9).

Scripture teaches that we are not saved by our works or efforts or obedience, but by putting faith alone in the Person and finished work of the Jesus of the Bible.

Salvation cannot be both by works and by grace: "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Rom. 11:6).

Entrance into heaven is not by our effort, but faith alone in what Christ has done: "When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness..." (Titus 3:4-5).

"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law" (Rom. 3:28).

In Mormonism salvation is less about Christ's penal substitutionary atoning work, and more about trying hard to follow Christ's example and develop god-like attributes.

But trying hard will not save (Rom. 3:19-20). Trusting in Christ's righteous life, death, and resurrection in my place alone will (1 Pet. 2:24).

Mormonism also teaches a form of salvation offered through vicarious baptism. A deceased individual can have a baptism performed in the Temple on their behalf.

The deceased then have the opportunity to embrace that vicarious work. Yet, Scripture teaches no such thing.

Objections & Final Word

- Some protest, “What’s the big deal? Mormons believe in Jesus, they read the Bible, and the book of Mormon. Isn’t that sufficient?”
- God has revealed the one and only way to heaven through the Jesus of the 66 books of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Words have meaning.
- God’s way is a system of revealed truth in the Bible which requires adherence to that revealed truth. God does not say, “Well, here’s what I’ve said in the Bible, but believe what’s comfortable for you, as long as it is similar in name.” There is salvation only through the Jesus of the Bible, and only as he is revealed in the Bible (Acts 4:12).
- Mormonism’s doctrinal aberrations are far more than peripheral paperwork. The deviations of LDS teaching from the pillar doctrines of the truth are catastrophic.
- Tragically, the LDS faith is an unsavable system that was off from the start. No angelic apparition, no matter how convincing, is to be embraced who suggests another gospel, as Moroni did to Joseph Smith: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!” (Gal 1:8).
- Some object, “That’s unkind to say that that someone’s personal faith can’t get them to heaven.” Once again, if someone is about to get hit by a truck, and we can prevent it, would it be more unkind to get them out of the way or say nothing? What is kind is to love someone’s eternal soul and bring them the truth.
- Sometimes well-meaning individuals respond, “Well, I know some wonderful, moral people who are Mormons.” I, too, know some kind people in the Mormon faith.
- However, the issue here is not on the kindness of a system’s adherents, but the truthfulness of its doctrine.

- Despite the outward morality which may exist within Mormonism, it is an unsavable system since it departs from the most essential doctrines; Scripture, God, Christ, and the gospel.
- We must lovingly appeal to Mormons to turn from their false teaching and submit themselves to the word of God in the 66 books of the Bible alone.
- In Scripture, they will see the glorious Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, who has existed from all eternity, yet stepped into this world to propitiate the wrath of God for our sin. By faith in him, not our works, we are justified and reconciled to God (Eph. 2:8-9).