

MORMONISM

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The Basic Beliefs, Doctrines and Definitions

DEFINED:

Mormonism is the predominant religious tradition of the Latter Day Saint movement of Restorationist Christianity started by Joseph Smith in Western New York in the 1820s and 30s. The word Mormon originally derived from the Book of Mormon, a religious text published by Smith, which he said he translated from golden plates with divine assistance. The book describes itself as a chronicle of early indigenous peoples of the Americas and their dealings with God. Based on the book's name, Smith's early followers were more widely known as Mormons, and their faith Mormonism.

Video Notes:

What is your experience with the Mormon church?

What do you think of their stories? How are their stories like--or unlike--your faith story?

The American Religious Identification Survey found Mormons are viewed less favorably by Americans than any other major group associated with Christianity. Why do you feel that is the case?

What questions does Craig Blomberg raise for you?

Do you think Mormonism is a cult? Why or why not?

Jesus asked his followers, "Who do people say I am?" (Mark 8:27). How would you answer that question?

Mormons say they believe in Jesus. Do you think its the same Jesus as we find in the New Testament (Acts 16:31)?

Where Mormons Get Their Truths

- **The Bible** “as far as it is translated correctly” (Articles of Faith 1:8). They accept the King James Version as authoritative.
- **The Book of Mormon** (BOM) which Joseph Smith declared is “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 194).
- **The Doctrine and Covenants** (D&C) as Scripture. It “is a collection of modern revelations . . . regarding The Church of Jesus Christ as it has been restored in these last days” (*Gospel Principles*, p. 54). **The Pearl of the Great Price** (PGP) is the fourth book believed to be inspired. “It clarifies doctrines and teachings that were lost from the Bible and gives added information concerning the creation of the earth” (*Gospel Principles*, p. 54).
- **The church’s president** is regarded as “a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet” (D&C 107:91-92).

BELIEFS

POLYTHEISM: God (Heavenly Father) is an exalted man with a physical body of flesh and bone. LDS founder Joseph Smith said, “If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345). The trinity is denied with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost seen as three separate entities. The Father and Son were previously human. “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. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (Doctrine and Covenants [D&C] 130:22).

PRE-EXISTENCE: People are the preexisted spiritual offspring of the Heavenly Father and Mother. “All men and women are . . . literally the sons and daughters of Deity . . . Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal (physical) body” (Joseph F. Smith, “The Origin of Man,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1909, pp. 78,80, as quoted in *Gospel Principles*, p. 11). They are born basically good and are “gods in embryo.” A commonly quoted Mormon aphorism (attributed to fifth LDS president Lorenzo Snow) says “*As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become.*”

SALVATION: Jesus’ atonement provided immortality for all people. Exaltation (godhood) is available only to Mormons through obedience to LDS teachings: faith, baptism, endowments, celestial marriage, and tithing. “Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—Wherefore, all things are theirs” (D&C, 76:58-59). These are some of the blessings given to *exalted* people: 1. They will live eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see D&C, 76). 2. They will become gods. 3. They will have their righteous family members with them and will be able to have spirit children also. These spirit children will have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father. They will be an eternal family. 4. They will receive a fullness of joy. 5. They will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have – all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge (See *Gospel Principles*, p. 302). Baptism for the dead provides post-mortem salvation for non-Mormons, and is “by immersion performed by a living person for one who is dead. This ordinance is performed in temples” (GP, p. 375). (See also *Gospel Principles*, chapters 18–23.)

CHURCH Asserts that the LDS is the one true church on the face of the earth. Joseph Smith claimed Jesus Christ told him to join none of the existing denominations because “they were all wrong . . . that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt” (PGP: Joseph Smith–History 1:19–20). Mormons claim only the LDS possesses the divine authority of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood as restored by God to Joseph Smith in 1829. (D&C 13; 27:8–13; 107:1–20; PGP: Joseph Smith–History 1:68–73)