

Mormons and Christianity

Important Words and Facts

Number of Mormons in the U.S. – More than 5,000,000.

Number of Mormons in the world – about 11,000,000.

When the Mormon church started – In the 1820's.

Elder – a man who is a spiritual leader in the Mormon church.

Joseph Smith – man who started the Mormon church.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints – official name of the Mormon church.

Salt Lake City, Utah – headquarters of the Mormon church.

Independence, Missouri – the other “holy city” for the Mormons, where they say Jesus will rule from when He comes back.

Mormons are well known for – pairs of young men as missionaries who are dressed in white shirts and ties, strong family values, family genealogy, and Utah.

Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints – a smaller Mormon church with similar teachings, first led by Joseph Smith's son. Now named Community of Christ.



History

About 1820, Joseph Smith was 14 years old and living with his family near Palmyra, New York. He said he had a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ, telling him there was no true church on earth. Later, an angel named Moroni showed Joseph Smith some golden plates with writing on them. J.S. later translated these into the Book of Mormon. He did the “translation” by looking into a hat. He said the words appeared, he read them, and another man wrote them.

Joseph Smith's teachings were so strange and different from Christian teachings, people persecuted the Mormons very much. So they quickly moved from New York to Ohio, then Missouri, then Illinois. In 1844, in Commerce, Illinois (renamed Nauvoo), Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were arrested and put in prison, charged with treason and conspiracy. While in prison, a mob attacked and killed them.

Brigham Young became the president of the church after Joseph Smith died. He led the move from Illinois to Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1846-1847. Brigham Young gave many teachings that made the Mormon church what it is today.

The Mormons practiced polygamy (one man could have more than one wife) until 1890. Joseph Smith had about 40 wives, and Brigham Young had about 100. In 1890, under pressure from the U.S. government, the church president said that polygamy must end. Some Mormons have continued to have more than one wife, but the church officially says they can't.

Beliefs

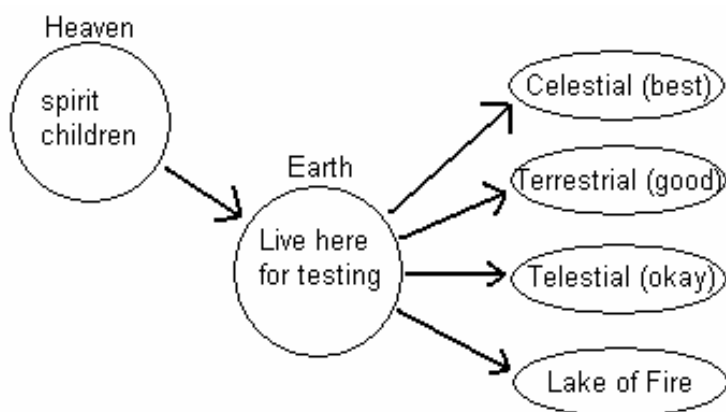
Some people think Mormons are Christian. They are not. They have many teachings that are different from true Christian teaching. We do not have enough time to explain them all. These are only a few basic teachings to help you understand what they believe.

Where is their teaching from? Mormons use the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, all written by Joseph Smith. They also use the Bible, but they don't think it is completely right. Mormons also believe God continues to tell us new things through their church president. He can prophesy and give them new teachings. They believe God can and does change His mind sometimes (but see Malachi 3:6).

Who is God? Mormons say there is no Trinity. They say God the Father was once a man, then became God. God has a wife and many children. Jesus is His first son. The Holy Spirit is another son. Lucifer is another son who rebelled and became the devil. We are also God's children, so Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and Lucifer are our brothers.

What does salvation mean? Mormons say Jesus gave His life for us and took our sins on Himself. That sounds right, same as the Bible teaches. But they don't mean Jesus forgives our sins. Mormons teach that Jesus died and rose again, so now all people will rise alive again. But that is only physical life, not spiritual life. Jesus' death and resurrection doesn't give us life. We must obey His laws and commands if we want spiritual life. They say Jesus' commands are these: faith in Jesus, repentance, immersion baptism, and laying on hands to give the Holy Ghost.

If you are a baptized Mormon and obey God's laws very well, you go to the



Celestial kingdom. You can even become a god yourself. If you are a good person, but not baptized Mormon, you go to the Terrestrial kingdom. If you are a wicked person, but you suffered enough in hell for your sins, you go to the Telestial kingdom. If you are very wicked, you go into the lake of fire with the devil and his angels.

What else do Mormons teach? Mormons have many other different teachings not from the Bible. These are only a few examples.

- They will not drink any alcohol. They use water in the Lord's Supper.
- Believe Jesus will come back and rule the earth for 1,000 years from Independence, MO.
- They have no regular pastors. Any good Mormon man can become a priest. They have special clothing (underwear) that they must wear as a priest.
- They believe God will not forgive certain sins. But if they die with shedding blood, they earn forgiveness for their sins. Utah is the only state that allows death by firing squad. See Hebrews 10:10.
- Mormons believe they can be married for eternity. See Matthew 22:24-30.
- Mormons baptize living people for dead people. They say dead unbelievers are in spiritual prison. If a Mormon is baptized for them, they have a second chance to get out of prison.

Mormon Beliefs

Before time

Before God created the earth, He lived in heaven with His wife. Before, God was a man, and He has a body and a wife. They also had many spirit children. Jesus was born first. Other children are Lucifer (who later became Satan), you and me and all people on earth. That means Jesus, Satan, you and I are all brothers and sisters.

While we lived in heaven as spirits, we were all good and perfect. But we worked differently. Some worked a little, some worked very hard. The spirits who worked hard earned high positions. Later, they came to earth as important people and prophets.

Life in heaven was good, but could be better. God held a Grand Council to announce a plan to make us better. This was God's plan. He will make an earth. His children will go there to get tested. They will sin, but He will send a Savior. If His children have faith and carefully obey God's laws, they can come back to heaven and become a god themselves.

Now the question, who will be the Savior? Jesus volunteered, Lucifer also volunteered. God chose Jesus to be the Savior. Lucifer got angry and rebelled against God, so God threw him and his followers out of heaven. Lucifer then became the devil.

Creation

God created the earth. God made the first man, Adam. In heaven, Adam was the archangel Michael. God told Adam and Eve to have children, so His spirit children could come to earth in bodies. But while Adam and Eve were perfect, they couldn't have children. Mormons teach that if Adam and Eve never sinned, they could have no joy, no salvation, and God's plan would fail. When they sinned, they became separated from God, but now they could have joy, do good, and have salvation.

Old Testament Times

Mormons teach that God told many people (Adam, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, etc.) the full story of salvation, everything Jesus would do.

600 B.C.

Before Jesus came, some Israelites left Jerusalem and came to America. These Israelites and their descendants are supposed to be in the stories in the Book of Mormon.

30 A.D

Jesus suffered, died, and rose again. Mormons says our sin is like a huge debt we owe God. We can't pay Him back. So Jesus took all our sins and died on the cross. That means we are united with God again, but now we owe Jesus the debt for our sins. Mormons teach we can't pay God for our sins, but we can pay Jesus. If we repent, live right and obey His laws, then we can pay back Jesus for our sins.

100-200 A.D.

After Jesus rose from the dead, He came to America. Remember, Mormons believe some Jews came over to America. Jesus met them and told them His plan of salvation.

Mormons believe the early church lost the true teachings. They say the first leaders in the church all got killed and the next leaders taught wrong. So for more than 1,600 years, the church was completely wrong and there were no true believers.

1820 A.D.

The angel Moroni came to Joseph Smith in Palmyra, New York. Mormons believe God decided that was the right time to bring back the true church. They say the angel showed Joseph Smith some gold plates with writing. Smith translated them and got the Book of Mormon. Later, he also wrote the Pearl of Great Price and Doctrine and Covenants.

Future

Mormons believe the Jews will suddenly believe in Jesus. Then Jesus will come and rule the earth for 1,000 years from two cities; Jerusalem and Independence, Missouri. It will be a time of great peace on earth.

End of world

The end of the 1,000 years will be the end of the world. Everyone will rise from the dead. Everyone will go to heaven. If bad people lived before Jesus came, those people died and went to hell. In hell, they suffered and paid for their sins. But now, because they paid for their sins, even they will go to heaven.

Eternity

Mormons believe heaven has many levels. Good Mormons who were married and obeyed all of God's laws will go to heaven and become gods, the highest level. Everyone else starts at another level. But through eternity, we have time to work and improve and go up to higher levels.

Bible Teachings

Before time	<p>Before God created the earth, He lived in heaven with – Himself. The Bible teaches only God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit lived before creation. God was God from eternity past. He never was a man, Numbers 23:19.</p> <p>God decided to create the universe. Why? The Bible doesn't give us a specific, detailed answer. But it does tell us some things. Psalm 19:1-6 says creation shows God's glory. Other verses also talk about God's glory and how He made us to praise Him (see Psalm 145, for example).</p>
Creation	<p>God created the earth. God made the first man, Adam from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). God didn't take a spirit from heaven and put it in Adam. Instead, God Himself breathed into Adam and made him alive. When Adam sinned, the whole universe fell apart and Adam and Eve became separated from God (Genesis 2:16-17)</p>
Old Testament Times	<p>God didn't tell everyone the full story of salvation before it happened. As Paul said in Romans 8:24-25, "But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." God doesn't show us everything. Instead, He tells us to trust Him.</p>
600 B.C.	<p>There is no Biblical, historical or archeological evidence that Israelites came to America. The <u>Book of Mormon</u> talks about huge cities here and also many animals like horses and elephants here. There were no horses in America until the Spanish brought them in the 1500's, and no elephants until more recently.</p>
30 A.D	<p>Jesus suffered, died, and rose again. That alone wins our salvation and gives us the promise of heaven. We cannot work and earn heaven, Ephesians 2:8-10. Our works are only to thank God, not to earn salvation. Mormons believe Jesus saves us, then we must obey God's laws to go to heaven. The whole book of Galatians was written against people who thought Jesus saved us so we could obey God's laws. See Galatians 3:1-11.</p> <p>The Bible says nothing about Jesus coming to America after He rose from the dead. After all, no Jews lived here for Him to visit!</p>
100-200 A.D.	<p>Mormons believe the early church lost the true teachings. The Bible says impossible! Read Matthew 16:18 – hell cannot defeat Christ's church. Christ's church will triumph. Also, read Matthew 28:20. Will Christ ever leave us? No! He promises, "I am with you always."</p> <p>Christ gave many warnings about false teachers. We need to pay attention to His words only. The Bible is our only true source to teach us about salvation, 2 Timothy 3:15.</p>
1820 A.D.	<p>Jesus said we should always be ready, because the end of the world can come at any time, without warning.</p>
Future, End of world	<p>The Bible never says heaven has different levels. The Bible does talk about rewards in heaven (Matthew 6:4, Colossians 3:23-24), but doesn't say anything about what they are. But the greatest reward we can receive is simply to be in heaven with God (God told Abraham that He was Abraham's reward, Genesis 15:1).</p>
Eternity	

How You Can Witness to the Mormons

Always be ready to defend your confidence in God when anyone asks you to explain it. However, make your defense with gentleness and respect. 1 Peter 3:15

Here are some things to remember if you talk to a Mormon. Remember, it should always be our goal to share Jesus with everyone, even if we think a person might not believe!

1. Remember that Mormons believe they must carefully follow God's laws to go to heaven and get the best place in heaven. If you ask them how they are saved, they will tell you about the "gospel." But for them, the "gospel" means faith in Jesus and following God's law. Read Acts 16:29-31. When the jailer asked how to become saved, Paul only answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Nothing more required.
2. Say "I believe in Jesus." Don't say, "I am a Lutheran." Like the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons believe that every other church is absolutely wrong and has no true teaching. Don't emphasize the church you belong to. You should emphasize how Jesus loves you and died for you. If they say the Christian church lost the truth, you can tell them about Matthew 16:18 and Matthew 28:20.
3. Pray. Before you open the door, before you talk to the person, say a short prayer and ask God to help you. Ask God to give you the right words to say. Ask God to help you share your faith in Jesus.
4. Smile. Many people are mean to Mormons and slam the door in their face. Show them Christian love. Tell them "Jesus loves me and forgives me. That gives me hope for the future."
5. Tell them you could never do enough good works to be saved. But you trust God saves you through Jesus, His free gift. You do good works only to thank God. (Ephesians 2:8-10)
6. Ask the person for his or her name. Tell them you will pray for them to know the same peace and joy you have in Jesus. Then after they leave, pray for them often!
7. Tell them you believe only the Bible is true. They will want to convince you the Book of Mormon is also true. Tell them that if the Bible is God's word and has the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, that should be enough for salvation.
8. If you don't feel comfortable talking with them, or if you feel like you don't know enough about the Bible to talk with them, then don't. Keep the conversation very short, or don't invite them in at all. If they come back, invite another Christian over, someone who knows a lot about the Bible.
9. Most of all, focus on Jesus and how He saves you. Mormons depend on their good works. Tell them you have hope and peace and joy because Jesus died and rose again for you.