

Mormonism

(The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

Mormonism is one of the largest and most influential of the cults of Christianity. Is Mormonism polytheistic? What is the connection between Mormonism and theological modernism? Do Mormons really believe they can become gods? These issues and more will be addressed in this lecture.

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I. Mormonism is a Theological Cult of Christianity

A. It rejects nearly every essential Christian Doctrine.

1. It rejects the authority of Scripture.

2. LDS doctrine is polytheistic.

3. LDS doctrine teaches salvation by works.

4. LDS doctrine teaches that salvation is ultimately deification in a polytheistic worldview.

B. The Two Pillars of Mormonism

1. The Legitimacy of Lehi the Prophet (1 Nephi, *Book of Mormon*)

2. The Total Apostasy of the Church (Joseph Smith's First Vision)

II. Current Trends in Mormonism

A. The Ecumenical Mormon

B. F.A.R.M.S. & Maxwell Institute

III. Experience Over Doctrine in Mormon Methodology

A. Mormon Epistemology

1. The LDS ultimately rely on a combination of Irrational Fideism, Mysticism & Existentialism

2. Ultimately, the LDS trust the church and the prophet as the final authority for religious claims, not objective propositional revelation.

B. Praying about the Book of Mormon (Moroni 10:4; D & C 9:8-9)

1. The LDS's goal is to have you agree to pray a prayer from the Book of Mormon to determine whether the Book of Mormon and the LDS Church are true.

2. The following are typical ways a Christian may respond to the request
 - a. Rhetorical Response: "Do I have to pray about committing murder?"

 - b. Biblical Response: Is. 8:19-20; Acts 17:11

 - c. Logical Response: Circular Reasoning

 - d. LDS Doctrine Related Response

C. The Authority and use of the Bible to Judge Truth Claims vs. Changing Established Canonical Revelation

1. We are to test claims of "new" Scripture by whether it comports with "Old" Scripture (Is. 8:19-20; Acts 17:11)

2. We are not to change what God has revealed to us. (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19)

IV. Dealing with "Anti-Mormon" Claims

1. LDS Contention: "I feel a spirit of contention here." (3 Nephi 11:29)

2. Christian Responses to the LDS Claim
Use the issue to segue to one of two foundations of Mormonism: The (Alleged) First Vision of Joseph Smith.
 - a. Note that orthodox Christians are responding to the universal LDS attack.

- b. Mormons first “attacked” Christian Orthodoxy in Joseph Smith's “First Vision.” (*Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith History*, 1:17-19 (First Vision)) Smith claims:

V. Total Apostasy & Restoration

A. The Connection Between Apostasy, Restoration & Authority

1. The LDS believe their authority is derived from three interconnected sources: The Restored Church, the priesthood, and the LDS gospel.
2. However, if there was no total apostasy, then there was no restoration. If there was no restoration, there is no prophet of the restoration (Smith). If there is no prophet of the restoration, there is no restored church, restored priesthood, or restored gospel.
3. The entire LDS claim rests on whether there was a total apostasy.

B. LDS Claim of Universal Apostasy

1. *Universal Apostasy*

- a. The LDS church has always claimed as its official dogma that there was a complete, total apostasy of the entire Christian Church.

b. This claim is based on:

(1) Authoritative Statements from LDS Prophets & Leaders

- (a) The First Vision of Joseph Smith (PGP, JSH, 1:17-19, See above)

- (b) Bruce R. McConkie (LDS Apostle), *Mormon Doctrine*, “Apostasy” (p. 44)
“With the loss of the Gospel, the nations of the earth went into a moral eclipse called the Dark Ages, apostasy was universal.”

(2) LDS Standard Works (i.e., LDS Scriptures)

- (a) D & C 112:23- Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face.

 - (b) 1 Nephi 14:10 - And he said unto me: Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth.
- c. The Burden of Proof is on the LDS to prove this unfounded assertion.

2. *Selected Christian Responses to the LDS Claims of Total Apostasy*

a. Biblical Response

(1) Matt. 16:18 “The gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

b. Historical Response:

(1) An examination of the Church Fathers demonstrates the gospel was preserved.

(a) Papias (AD 60-130)

(b) Polycarp of Smyrna (AD 70-155)

(c) Irenaeus (AD 130-200)

c. LDS Source Responses

(1) The Apostle John never died (D&C 7:1-3)

(2) The Three Nephites (i.e., Nephite Apostles) never died (III Nephi 28)

(a) The LDS Dilemma:

(b) If the Book of Mormon is true, and the Three Nephites, who had the priesthood, never died, the religion of the LDS Church is false and Joseph Smith is a false prophet because he proclaimed a restoration that was not needed. There was no total apostasy.

(c) If the Book of Mormon is false at this point, it is not a reliable guide for history or doctrine.