

Mormonism Research Ministry's Quick Comparison of Fundamental Doctrines

Christianity

| Mormonism

SCRIPTURE

The sixty-six books of both the Old and New Testaments comprise the inspired Word of God and are without error in the original writings. The Bible is God's complete written revelation for the salvation of man and is the final authority regarding Christian life and faith (2 Peter 1:19-21).

"...and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Mormonism recognizes four written works as scripture: Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. Additionally, the inspired words of its living prophet, official church writings, and General Conference addresses are sometimes considered scripture. Of these sources, only the Bible is questioned regarding its reliability.

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts four books as scripture: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. These books are called the standard works of the Church... In addition to these four books of scripture, the inspired words of our living prophets become scripture to us. Their words come to us through conferences, the Liahona or Ensign magazine, and instructions to local priesthood leaders." (Gospel Principles, 2009, 45, 48)

"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." (Pearl of Great Price, Articles of Faith, #8)

"By faulty transmission, many 'plain and precious things' were 'taken away' or 'kept back' from reaching what later composed our precious Holy Bible." (Apostle Neil Maxwell, "The Wondrous Restoration," Ensign, April 2003, 35)

TRINITY

There is one uncreated eternal God (John 5:26), eternally existing in three persons: The Father (Ephesians 4:6), Son (John 1:1-4, 14), and Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4).

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4)

"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.'" (Isaiah 43:10-11)

Mormonism denies the biblical doctrine of the Trinity and instead promotes a "Godhead" comprised of three Gods: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Though the Godhead is three different Gods, they are understood to be one in purpose and united in their divine work.

"Our first and foremost article of faith in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is 'We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.' We believe these three divine persons constituting a single Godhead are united in purpose, in manner, in testimony, in mission. We believe Them to be filled with the same godly sense of mercy and love, justice and grace, patience, forgiveness, and redemption. I think it is accurate to say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable except believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the scriptures because it is not true." (Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland, "The One True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent," Ensign (Conference Edition), November 2007, 40)

"I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost a distinct personage or spirit, and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods." (Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 370)

FATHER

God is spirit (John 4:24). He has always been God (Psalm 90:2). He is omniscient and never changes (Malachi 3:6). He is the only true God (Isaiah 44:8).

"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:34-36)

According to Mormonism, God the Father is a Being of flesh and bone; He is not unique, but is one of many Gods; He was once a man who became a God by following the Mormon system.

"The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's." (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22)

"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... the Church proclaims the eternal truth: 'As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.'" (Apostle James Talmage, Articles of Faith, 430)

SON

Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). He was born of a virgin (Matthew 1:23). He led a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15). He atoned for sin by His death on the cross (Romans 5:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24) and rose again bodily on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Because He ever lives, He alone is our High Priest and advocate (Hebrews 7:28). Jesus is equal in authority with the Father because He is the true God (Philippians 2:6).

In Mormonism, Jesus is the literal firstborn son of God in the flesh. Like the Mormon God, he too attained his godhood via obedience. He has the ability to forgive sins, but only after a person has properly repented (i.e., confessed and forsaken all sin, see Doctrine and Covenants 58:43) and kept all of the commandments.

"Jesus became a God and reached His great state of understanding through consistent effort and continuous obedience to all the Gospel truths and universal laws." (Seventy Milton R. Hunter, The Gospel Through the Ages, 51, "published under the direction of the General Authorities," vii)

"Christians speak often of the blood of Christ and its cleansing power. Much that is believed and taught on this subject, however, is such utter nonsense and so palpably false that to believe it is to lose one's salvation. Many go so far, for instance, as to pretend, at least, to believe that if we confess Christ with our lips and avow that we accept him as our personal Savior, we are thereby saved. His blood, without other act than mere belief, they say, makes us clean." (What the Mormons Think of Christ, 31, a tract published by the LDS Church)

HOLY SPIRIT/HOLY GHOST

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God (Acts 5:3-4). In His ministry He convicts the world of sin (John 16:8), He regenerates spiritually dead people (Titus 3:5), He indwells believers (1 Corinthians 3:16), He guides (Galatians 5:16-18) and instructs (1 Corinthians 2:10-12), and empowers the believer (John 16:7) for Godly living and service.

"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:4-5)

Mormonism's Holy Ghost (also called the Holy Spirit), as the third member of the Godhead, is the only member who does not have a body of flesh and bone; he is a personage of spirit. He fills several roles including that of witness, comforter, and protector (both spiritually and physically). Once a person is baptized in the LDS Church and confirmed a member, he or she has the right to the constant companionship and assistance of the Holy Ghost as long as he or she keeps the commandments.

"When we are confirmed, we are given the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost, but it is a right that we must continue to earn through obedience and worthiness." (Apostle Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Unspeakable Gift," Liahona, May 2003, 27. Emphasis in original.)

"The Holy Ghost will protect us against being deceived, but to realize that wonderful blessing we must always do the things necessary to retain that Spirit. We must keep the commandments, pray for guidance, and attend church and partake of the sacrament each Sunday. And we must never do anything to drive away that Spirit." (Dallin H. Oaks (First Presidency), "Be Not Deceived," Ensign, November 2004, 46)

THE GOSPEL

The Good News that Jesus made atonement for our sin and by His death on the cross has reconciled us to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Colossians 1:20). Lost in sin (Romans 3:23) and enemies to God (Romans 5:10), we are unable to save ourselves (Romans 8:8). But God, in His mercy, saves us through Jesus Christ (Titus 3:4-7). The Gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16).

The Gospel according to Mormonism is comprised of all the doctrines, principles, laws, ordinances, and covenants necessary for a Mormon to achieve eternal life in the presence of God.

“Ordinances are basic to the gospel. Now, what is the gospel of which we speak? It is the power of God unto salvation; it is the code of laws and commandments which help us to become perfect, and the ordinances which constitute the entrance requirements.” (12th President Spencer W. Kimball, The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 502)

SALVATION

Mankind is saved by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ (John 6:47; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Believers are justified by His shed blood and shall be saved from wrath through Him, not by their own best effort or works, but by the works and mercy of Jesus (John 3:36; 1 John 1:9).

Mormonism recognizes two types of salvation: 1) resurrection; and 2) eternal life in the presence of God the Father. The first is *unconditional* and given to all people. The second is *conditional*, an eternal state merited by an individual’s works while on earth.

“Salvation is twofold: General—that which comes to all men irrespective of a belief (in this life) in Christ—and, Individual—that which man merits through his own acts through life and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.” (10th President Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation 1:134. Emphasis in original.)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

“The perfect relationship between the atoning grace of Christ and the obedient efforts of mankind is powerfully stated by Nephi: ‘We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do’ (2 Nephi 25:23). Furthermore, we are invited to ‘come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.’ When we deny ourselves ‘of all ungodliness,’ then and only ‘then is his grace sufficient’ for us (Moroni 10:32).” (“Plain and Precious Truths Restored,” Ensign, October 2006, 53)

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

“One of the most pernicious doctrines ever advocated by man, is the doctrine of ‘justification by faith alone,’ which has entered into the hearts of millions since the days of the so-called ‘reformation.’” (10th President Joseph Fielding Smith, The Restoration of All Things, 192)

“What then is the law of justification? It is simply this: ‘All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations’ (D. & C. 132:7), in which men must abide to be saved and exalted, must be entered into and performed in righteousness so that the Holy Spirit can justify the candidate for salvation in what has been done.” (Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 1966, 408. See also Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual: Religion 231 and 232, 50)

THE HEREAFTER

Jesus Christ will return again for His own (1 Thessalonians 4:16). All those forgiven by Christ will reign with Him throughout eternity (2 Timothy 2:12). He will be our God and we will be His people (2 Corinthians 6:16). Conversely, those who die without Christ’s forgiveness face eternal punishment (John 3:18).

Mormonism presents three heavenly kingdoms: 1) the celestial kingdom (for faithful Mormons); 2) the terrestrial kingdom (for lukewarm Mormons and for good people who rejected Mormonism while they were alive); and 3) the telestial kingdom (for the wicked of this world). Additionally, an eternal place called “Outer Darkness is reserved for the devil and his angels (as well as “sons of perdition,” Mormons who turned against the LDS Church while knowing the church is true). In the celestial kingdom there are several levels, the highest of which is for Mormons who have fulfilled all of their spiritual, moral, and ritual obligations and have attained the status of Gods, beings of the same essential nature as God the Father, ruling over their own worlds for all eternity.

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

“The whole design of the gospel is to lead us, onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follett sermon (see Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 342-62) and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is this grand and incomparable concept: As God now is, man may become!” (15th President Gordon B. Hinckley, Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, 179)

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.” (Romans 4:7)

“It is the celestial glory which we seek. It is in the presence of God we desire to dwell. It is a forever family in which we want membership. Such blessings must be earned.” (16th President Thomas S. Monson, “An Invitation to Exaltation” Ensign, May 1988, 53)

MANKIND

Man is a *created*, finite being; created in the image of God, with the ability to reason, make choices, and have relationships (Genesis 1:26-27). All mankind is sinful by nature, and has earned the penalty of death and eternal separation from God (Romans 3:23). Since man’s works are contaminated by sin, personal performance cannot overcome this deficit (Proverbs 20:9).

According to Mormonism, before being born as mortals on earth, human beings were first born as spirit children to Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother in their heavenly kingdom. As the literal offspring of deity, human beings are understood to be “gods in embryo.”

“Now, the fact that you and I are here in mortal bodies is evidence that we were among those who were in that great concourse of organized intelligences; we knew God, our Father. He was our Heavenly Father; we were sired by Him. We had a Heavenly Mother—can you think of having a father without a mother?” (11th President Harold B. Lee, The Teachings of Harold B. Lee, 22)

“What is [man]? He had his being in the eternal worlds; he existed before he came here. He is not only the son of man, but he is the son of God also. He is a God in embryo, and possesses within him a spark of that eternal flame which was struck from the blaze of God’s eternal fire in the eternal world, and is placed here upon the earth that he may possess true intelligence, true light, true knowledge...” (3rd President John Taylor, Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor, 2)

THE CHURCH

Christ’s church is not an organization, but rather the body of believers who have recognized their lost state and placed their trust in the redeeming work of Christ for their salvation (Ephesians 2:19-22). This true church was established by Jesus Christ, who declared that it will never be overcome (Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20).

According to Mormonism, after the deaths of the biblical apostles the church Christ established fell into apostasy. No true church existed until Joseph Smith restored it in the nineteenth century. Consequently, the LDS Church claims to be “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:30), and its members the only people authorized to preach the gospel or perform baptisms and other ordinances.

“To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:21)

“After the deaths of the Savior and His Apostles, men corrupted the principles of the gospel and made unauthorized changes in Church organization and priesthood ordinances. Because of this widespread wickedness, the Lord withdrew the authority of the priesthood from the earth. During the Great Apostasy, people were without divine direction from living prophets. Many churches were established, but they did not have priesthood power to lead people to the true knowledge of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Parts of the holy scriptures were corrupted or lost, and no one had the authority to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost or perform other priesthood ordinances. This apostasy lasted until Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820 and initiated the restoration of the fulness of the gospel.” (True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference, 2004, 13)