

Is Mormonism Christian?

A Comparison of Mormonism and Historic Christianity

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Is Mormonism Christian? This may seem like a puzzling question to ask. Mormons include the Bible among the four books they recognize as Scripture and insist that Jesus Christ is central to their faith as evidenced by their official name, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Furthermore, Mormons' commitment to high moral standards and strong families is impressive. Doesn't it follow that Mormonism is genuinely Christian?

The question here is not whether individual Mormons are saved (a question we cannot answer) or whether the LDS Church is "Christian" in the sense that any group that professes faith in Christ (as Mormonism does) is part of the world religion known as Christianity. Rather, we are asking whether Mormonism is an authentic form of Christianity that teaches the essential truths of the gospel. To resolve this question, we need to compare carefully the basic doctrines of Mormonism with the basic doctrines of historic, biblical Christianity. To represent the Mormon position fairly and accurately, in addition to the Mormon scriptures (Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price), we have relied on several well-known Mormon doctrinal publications currently published by the LDS Church, including its official magazine *Ensign*.

1. Is there more than one true God?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have always believed that *only one true and living God created and rules all things* and that *the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, though personally distinct, are one God, the Lord Jehovah* (Genesis 1:1-31; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; 44:6-8, 24; Matthew 28:19-20; John 1:1; 10:30; 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 13:14).

By contrast, **Mormonism teaches that many Gods made the world** (Book of Abraham 4:1-31) and that **the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate Gods** (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 41-42). It also teaches that **the Father has a wife, our heavenly mother**, and that we are "literally" the offspring of **divine parents** (*Ensign*, Jan. 1989).

2. Was God the Father once a man like us?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have always believed that *God is Spirit* (John 4:20-24; 1 Timothy 6:15, 16) *and in His divine nature is not a man* (Numbers 23:19; Hosea 11:9; Romans 1:22-23), *and that He has always (eternally) existed as the all-powerful God* (Psalm 90:2; 102:12, 25-27; Isaiah 40:28; 43:10; 1 Timothy 1:17).

By contrast, **the LDS Church teaches that God the Father was once a man like us who progressed to become a God and has a body of flesh and bone** (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). It affirms Joseph Smith's teaching that **God is "an exalted being" who "was once a man like us,"** and Lorenzo Snow's statement, **"As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be"** (*Gospel Principles* [2009], 275, 279; *Presidents of the Church Student Manual* [2003], 89; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* [2011], 71).

3. Are Jesus, Satan, and all mankind spirit brothers?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have always believed that *Jesus is the unique Son of God, the only human being who came down from heaven to become a man* (John 3:31; 13:3; 16:28; 17:5). As God, *Jesus Christ made everything, including all spiritual powers such as the angels as well as Satan, who rebelled against Him* (Psalm 148:2-5; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Human beings start to exist at the beginning of their physical lives (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; Job 38:4-7).

By contrast, **the LDS Church teaches that Jesus Christ, humans, angels, and fallen spirits including Satan are all eternal beings that were never created and that are all spirit brothers and sisters**. In particular, **Christ and Lucifer (Satan) were two spirit brothers**; Christ supported Heavenly Father's plan while Lucifer did not (Doctrine and Covenants 93:21-33; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 9-10; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 355; "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, June 1986).

4. Was Jesus literally the physical offspring of Mary and God the Father?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have always believed that the eternal Son of God, *Jesus Christ, became a man by being conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the supernatural creative agency of the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:34-35).

By contrast, **the LDS Church teaches that Jesus Christ** is "the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh," meaning that **He was the literal "offspring" of the Father and Mary**, "sired" by Heavenly Father as his only son in the flesh, so that he had two literal, physical parents—his immortal Father and his mortal mother Mary. **The LDS Church denies that Jesus was "begotten" by the Holy Ghost**, since it understands "begotten" literally to mean sired by a physical father (*Ensign*, April 1997; Ezra Taft Benson, in *Ensign*, Dec. 2001; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 53; *Ensign*, Dec. 2010, 8).

5. Was the fall of Adam and Eve a great blessing?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have believed that the disobedience of our first parents Adam and Eve was a great evil. Through their fall, sin entered the world, bringing all human beings under condemnation and death. Thus we are born with a sinful nature, and will be judged for the sins we commit as individuals. (Ezekiel 18:1-20; Romans 5:12-21).

By contrast, **the LDS Church teaches that Adam's sin was "a necessary step in the plan of life and a great blessing to all of us"** (Book of Mormon—2 Nephi 2:14-26; Book of Moses 5:10-12; *Preparing for Exaltation: Teacher's Manual* [1998], 13-14; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 29).

6. Can we make ourselves worthy of God's forgiveness?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have believed that the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life in God's presence is a free gift of God on the basis of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on the cross (John 3:16; Romans 3:21-26; 5:6-11; 6:23;

Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 10:12, 19; 1 John 1:9). We cannot earn or be worthy of God's forgiveness, but must receive this gift by acknowledging our helpless, sinful state and trusting solely in Christ (Luke 24:47; John 11:25-26; Acts 2:38; 16:31; Romans 10:9-13). Those who trust in God's grace in Christ alone for their salvation will show their faith by their good works, but those works in no sense save them (Romans 6:1-4; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-26).

By contrast, **Mormonism teaches that a person must become worthy in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life in the presence of God the Father through obedience to all the commands of the LDS Church, including exclusive Mormon temple rituals.** Good works and ritual ordinances are *requirements* for this full, individual salvation, and Christ's atonement makes up what is lacking in a Mormon's best efforts (Book of Mormon—2 Nephi 25:23; Articles of Faith 3; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 62-65, 109-112, 277-78).

7. Does the atonement assure immortality for those who reject Christ?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have believed that Christ's atoning death on the cross provides the complete solution for humankind's sin problem, but that those who reject God's grace in this life will have no part in this salvation but are under God's judgment for eternity (John 3:18, 36; Hebrews 9:27; 10:26-27; 1 John 5:11-12).

By contrast, **Mormonism teaches that the atonement assures resurrection and immortality to all people, including those who reject Christ in this life.** While only faithful Mormons and those who accept the Mormon gospel in the afterlife can live in God the Father's presence, practically everyone else will be given immortality in a heavenly kingdom of lesser glory, even those who rejected Christ in this life (Doctrine & Covenants 76; 88:16-33; *Gospel Principles*, 61-62, 242-44, 271-73).

8. Are there scriptures more reliable than the Bible?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have believed that the Scriptures that preserve the words of the ancient prophets and apostles and of Jesus Christ himself (contained in the Bible) are the unique, final, and infallible Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15-16). God's providential preservation of the text of the Bible was marvelously illustrated in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

By contrast, **the LDS Church teaches that the Bible has been corrupted, is missing many "plain and precious parts," and does not contain the fullness of the gospel** (Book of Mormon—1 Nephi 13:26-29; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 206; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 45-48). It also claims **that the Book of Mormon is more accurate and reliable than the Bible** (Articles of Faith 8; *Book of Mormon Teacher Resource Manual* [2004], 20).

9. Is the LDS Church the only true church?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have believed that the true church was divinely established by Jesus and could never and will never disappear from the earth (Matthew 16:18; 18:15-18; 28:18-20; John 15:16; 17:11; Ephesians 3:21; Jude 3). Christians acknowledge that there have been times of corruption and apostasy within the church, but believe there has always been a remnant that held fast to the biblical essentials.

By contrast, **the LDS Church claims to be the only true church on earth and that all other churches are part of a great apostasy** that prevailed throughout church history until Joseph Smith. It teaches that **only Mormons are authorized to preach the gospel or to perform baptisms** and other ordinances (Doctrine & Covenants 1:29-30; Articles of Faith 4-5; Joseph Smith—History 1:18-19; *Gospel Principles*, 67, 92).

10. Can humans become gods just like their Heavenly Father?

The Bible teaches and orthodox Christians through the ages have believed that God is an absolutely unique being, existing from eternity to eternity as God (Psalm 90:2; 102:25-27; Isaiah 40:18, 25; 43:10). Redeemed human beings, though they will become perfected creatures bearing God’s image and like Christ in moral and physical perfection, will not become gods or beings of the same transcendent, divine nature as the Father, Jesus the Son, or the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:44-48; Romans 8:14-29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17-21; Philippians 3:7-21; 2 Peter 1:3-7).

By contrast, **the LDS Church teaches that faithful Mormons who fulfill all of their spiritual, moral, and ritual obligations can eventually attain the status of gods, beings of the same essential nature as God the Father ruling over their own worlds.** “As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be” (Lorenzo Snow, in *Presidents of the Church: Student Manual* [2004], 88, 90; *Gospel Fundamentals* [2001], 201; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 275-79; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* [2011], 71).

Conclusion

Mormons share some common beliefs and values with orthodox Christians. They believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose bodily from the grave. They are pro-life. We respect Mormons as good neighbors and good citizens. However, that respect should not keep us from recognizing the serious differences between Mormonism and historic Christianity. There are fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the two. The LDS Church’s founder, Joseph Smith, forced this issue when he claimed to be a prophet of God with new revelations that impugned the trustworthiness of the Bible, contradicted the teachings of historic Christianity, and claimed that only the LDS Church was the true church. Jesus Christ and his apostles specifically warned us about false prophets who would claim to speak in his name but who would teach “another gospel” (Matthew 7:15-23; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 2:1). As documented here, Mormonism teaches a radically different view of God, Christ, and salvation. It denies the validity of all churches except itself and all baptisms other than its own. Based on this evidence, we are convinced that Mormonism represents just such a counterfeit gospel.

Mormons are free to believe as they choose—a freedom we have no desire to infringe—and to consider themselves to be the only true Christian church. By the same token, however, those who accept the historic Christian faith taught in the Bible have the freedom and responsibility to draw a clear line between authentic Christianity and the unbiblical religion of Mormonism.