

Opening Prayer: Holy Father, You desire to save all people through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Open our minds to more accurately grasp Your plan of salvation that we may more confidently believe it and faithfully share it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Review Session 2:

- Mormon Exodus from New York to Mid-West to Utah was full of opposition and persecution.
- Smith's response to opposition and persecution was in direct conflict with Jesus' teachings.

In Session 3 we will explore the question – Are Mormons Christian? Comparing Joseph Smith's ideas of God and Jesus to what Scripture tells us.

Watch the Video: Session 3

Are Mormons Christian?

Latter-day Saints (LDS) are convinced they are Christians for many reasons:

- They are taught the LDS is the only true Christian church on earth.
- Unlike with many Christian denominations, the name "Jesus Christ" is in the official LDS name: "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."
- They are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
- They believe in Jesus' atonement.
- They believe they are saved by grace.

This often makes it confusing and frustrating to talk with Mormons about faith: they say all the right words and phrases. The first thing to keep in mind is that using Christian words and phrases doesn't mean anything if they are not used the way the prophets taught in the Old Testament and the way Jesus Christ and His apostles taught in the New Testament. When Mormons use those words and phrases, they mean something completely different from what the Bible means. Paul once warned the Galatians about a counterfeit gospel that was deceiving them:

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the Gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

Over time, Joseph Smith progressively distorted the faith handed down to us in the Bible. The following are some examples of the teachings he twisted.

God the Father

In his reported visit of the Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in the Sacred Grove, Smith presents God the Father being a flesh and blood human alongside the God-man Jesus Christ. According to Smith, God the Father began life just like each of us, a spirit child born of another Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. In fact, Smith claims our God is only one among many gods who all followed the same path (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 121:32). Like us he was given a body and lived on another planet. He married multiple wives, chose between good and evil, died and rose again, and progressed on his way to godhood.

But the Old Testament in the Bible makes clear that God is not human, nor did He ever change and progress (READ and DISCUSS):

Numbers 23:19a - _____

1 Samuel 15:29 - _____

Hosea 11:9 - _____

Malachi 3:6a - _____

- Why is the notion of becoming like God—or becoming gods ourselves—so appealing to humans?
- What are the consequences of setting limits on our God whom Scripture describes as being without limits?
- Read and note the attribute of God in each passage:
 - o 1 Timothy 1:17 - _____
 - o Malachi 3:6 - _____
 - o Matthew 19:26 - _____
 - o John 21:17 - _____
 - o Jeremiah 23:24 - _____
- What comfort does the God of Scripture give us?

Jesus Christ

Joseph Smith claimed that Jesus was also a spirit child—the first of many spirit children born of heavenly Father and Mother. He taught that Jesus became human by being conceived of the virgin Mary, then after His death and resurrection attained godhood.

Again, the Bible disagrees:

Read John 1:1-3, 9-14.

With the words “In the beginning,” John takes us back to the first moment of creation and shows us the preincarnate Son of God existing from all eternity.

- How does the phrase “the Word was God” contradict Joseph Smith’s teaching that Jesus began as a spirit child, became incarnate (received His human body), and only attained godhood after His life, death and resurrection?

- How do the words “only Son of the Father” in verse 14 show Jesus was uniquely the Son of God—not one (albeit the first) among billions of spirit children of God the Father?

Humans Becoming Gods

Mormonism offers us the tantalizing notion that we are like God. Like Him, we too can progress to become gods (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132:18-20, 37). But once again, in the Bible God makes very clear that there is a vast difference between God the Creator and all of us as His creatures.

“Before Me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after Me ... Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides Me there is no god ... Is there a God besides Me? There is no Rock; I know not any” (Isaiah 43:10b; 44:6, 8b).

- In what way does God’s statement, “Besides Me there is no god,” totally undercut Joseph Smith’s idea of a council of gods?
- How do God’s words, “I am the first,” undercut the Mormon claim that He was once a spirit child of another heavenly Father and Mother?
- How do His words, “I am the last,” crush the notion that we can become gods if we work hard enough?

Faithfully interpreting God’s final phrase, “There is no Rock; I know not any,” can be difficult unless we remember God is all-knowing. Since God knows all things, we can be confident that, if He has no knowledge of another Rock or god, none other exists.

The Serpent’s Echo

This very attractive Mormon teaching echoes the serpent’s lying words in the Garden of Eden: “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). Without realizing it, the Latter-day Saints take Satan’s side and continue his vile deception when they teach that Adam’s fall was beneficial for humanity. They teach the fall allowed all of us as spirit children to receive our human bodies, and set us on the path to godhood.

The Bible clearly teaches Adam’s fall was damning and catastrophic to Adam and Eve and all their human descendants. It is only through Jesus’ atonement that God the Father forgives our sins and counts us as righteous—apart from any of our works or ceremonial acts. Look at Paul’s words in the book of Romans:

The free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many

were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:15-19).

- How does Paul's constant repetition of the phrase "free gift" remind us that our works have absolutely nothing to do with our eternal life with God after this life?
- How does Paul's description of God's abundant grace through Jesus Christ contradict the way Joseph Smith limits the effectiveness of Jesus' righteousness, by demanding human works and ceremonies to be done for us to make progress on our path toward godhood?

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are unique among all humans. You are the only-begotten Son of God, taking on human flesh to become one of us. Thank You for Your perfect life of obedience, which earns eternal life in Your Father's glorious presence for all believers. It was Your all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross that turned away the Father's wrath against our sins. Give us wisdom and grace to share Your great salvation with Mormons and everyone we meet. Amen.