

## **Christianity, Cult's and Religions – A comparative Look at the World we live in.**

During this study, we'll look at 8 distinctive areas that separate and define each of 20 different religions or cults that exist in the world today. This is not to be considered an exhaustive study nor is it to be considered inclusive of all the world's religions or cults. But it is only an overview of some of the major influences in the world today. There are many more sub-cultures and "sects" of each of these that we will not have the time to discuss. Therefore let me encourage each of you to determine to investigate and learn for yourselves what those influences are and how they may affect your personal Christian belief system and Christian walk with God.

### ***Mormonism (The Church Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints):***

**Founder:** Joseph Smith

**Date:** 1830

**Location:** Started in Rochester, NY; Headquarters in Salt Lake City, UT

**Followers:** Mormons

**Key Writings:** The Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, the KJV only Bible or the "Inspired Version" by Joseph Smith which is less reliable than the most translations. They publish two magazines, *"Ensign and Liahona"*.

**Who is God?:** God the father was once a man but progressed to become the godhead he is today. He has a physical body and has a wife, the (Heavenly Mother). There is no Trinity, but three separate gods, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Worthy members may one day become "exalted" to godhead themselves.

**Who is Jesus?:** Jesus is a separate god from God the Father. He was created as a spirit child by the Father and the Mother in Heaven, and is the "elder brother" of all men and spirit beings (including Lucifer). His body was created through sexual union between God the father and Mary. *(Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Mormon church, said that instead of letting any other man do it God the Father did it with Mary. He said that the birth of our savior was as natural as the birth of our parents. Essentially, what this means is that Brigham Young taught that God the father came down and had relations with Mary, his spirit daughter, to produce the body of Jesus.)* Jesus was married. His death on the cross does not provide full atonement for all sin, but does provide everyone with resurrection. *In the Mormon plan of salvation there needed to be a savior: Jesus. But Jesus was a spirit in heaven. For him to be born on earth, Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Mormon church, said that instead of letting any other man do it God the Father did it with Mary. He said that the birth of our savior was as natural as the birth of our parents. Essentially, what this means is that Brigham Young taught that God the father came down and had relations with Mary, his spirit daughter, to produce the body of Jesus. Though many Mormons will not entertain such incestuous thoughts about God and Mary, this is what Brigham Young taught, and as far as we know this has not been denied by the Mormon church.*

**Who is the Holy Spirit?:** The “holy spirit” is different from the “Holy Ghost”. The “holy spirit” is not God, but is an influence or an electricity-like emanation from God (or the “light of Christ”).

**How to be Saved:** Resurrected by grace, but saved (exalted to godhood) by works, including faithfulness to church leaders, Mormon baptism, tithing, ordination, marriage, and secret temple rituals. There is no eternal life without Mormon membership. *(Nevertheless, Jesus was born, got married, and had children. He died on the cross and paid for sins -- but not on the cross only. According to Mormonism, the atonement of Christ was not only on the cross. It began in the Garden of Gethsemane before he went to the cross.)*

**What happens after Death?:** Eventually nearly everyone goes to one of three separate heavenly “kingdoms,” with some achieving godhood. Apostates and murderers go to “outer darkness.” *(In Mormonism, men and women have the potential of becoming gods. President Lorenzo Snow said, "As god once was, man is. As God is, man may become." In order to reach this exalted state of godhood, a person must first become a good Mormon, pay a full ten percent tithe to the Mormon church, follow various laws and ordinances of the church, and be found worthy. At this point, they receive a temple recommend, whereupon the Mormon is allowed to enter the sacred temples in order to go through a set of secret rituals: baptism for the dead, celestial marriage, and various oaths of secrecy and commitment. Additionally, four secret handshakes are taught so the believing Mormon, upon entering the third level of Mormon heaven, can shake hands with god in a certain pattern. This celestial ritual is for the purpose of permitting entrance into the highest level of heaven. For those who achieve this highest of heavens, exaltation to godhood awaits them. Then he or she will be permitted to have his or her own planet and be the god of his own world, and the Mormon system will be expanded to other planets.*

**Other facts, beliefs, and practices.**

Secret temple “endowment” rituals and “celestial marriage” are available only to members in good standing.

They believe in Baptisms on behalf of the dead.

“Word of Wisdom” prohibits tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine drinks.

Two-year missionary commitment encouraged.

Tithing is essential.

Door-to-door proselytizing is also encouraged.

Extensive social networking is important.

Until 1978 African-Americans were denied full access to Mormon priesthood and privileges.

## **1. Atonement**

- a. "Jesus paid for all our sins when He suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane," (Laurel Rohlfling, "Sharing Time: The Atonement," *Friend*, [Mar. 1989](#), p. 39.).
- b. "We accept Christ's atonement by repenting of our sins, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and obeying all of the commandments," (*Gospel Principles*, Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, p. 68.).

## **2. Baptism**

- a. Baptism for the dead, (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. II, p. 141). This is a practice of baptizing each other in place of non-Mormons who are now dead. Their belief is that in the afterlife, the "newly baptized" person will be able to enter into a higher level of Mormon heaven.

## **3. Bible**

- a. "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly. . ." (8th Article of Faith of the Mormon Church).
- b. "Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God," (1 Nephi 13:28).

## **4. Book of Mormon**

- a. The book of Mormon is more correct than the Bible, (*History of the Church*, 4:461).

## **5. Devil, the**

- a. The Devil was born as a spirit after Jesus "in the morning of pre-existence," (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 192).
- b. Jesus and Satan are spirit brothers and we were all born as siblings in heaven to them both, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 163).
- c. A plan of salvation was needed for the people of earth so Jesus offered a plan to the Father and Satan offered a plan to the father but Jesus' plan was accepted. In effect the Devil wanted to be the Savior of all Mankind and to "deny men their agency and to dethrone god," (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 193; *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, p. 8).

## **6. God**

- a. God used to be a man on another planet, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 321; Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, p. 613-614; Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 345; Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, p. 333).
- b. "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's..." (D&C 130:22).
- c. God is in the form of a man, (Joseph Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, p. 3).
- d. "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!!! . . . We have imagined that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take away the veil, so that you may see," (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345).

- e. God the Father had a Father, (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 476; Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, p. 19; Milton Hunter, *First Council of the Seventy*, Gospel through the Ages, p. 104-105).
- f. God resides near a star called Kolob, (*Pearl of Great Price*, p. 34-35; *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 428).
- g. God had sexual relations with Mary to make the body of Jesus, (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, 1857, p. 218; vol. 8, p. 115). This one is disputed among many Mormons and not always 'officially' taught and believed. Nevertheless, Young, the 2nd prophet of the Mormon church taught it.
- h. "Therefore we know that both the Father and the Son are in form and stature perfect men; each of them possesses a tangible body . . . of flesh and bones," (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 38).

#### **7. God, becoming a god**

- a. After you become a good Mormon, you have the potential of becoming a god, (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345-347, 354.)
- b. "Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them," (D&C 132:20).

#### **8. God, many gods**

- a. There are many gods, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 163).
- b. "And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light: and there was light," (*Book of Abraham* 4:3).

#### **9. God, mother goddess**

- a. There is a mother god, (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 443).
- b. God is married to his goddess wife and has spirit children, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 516).

#### **10. God, Trinity**

- a. The trinity is three separate Gods: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. "That these three are separate individuals, physically distinct from each other, is demonstrated by the accepted records of divine dealings with man," (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 35).

#### **11. Gospel, The**

- a. The true gospel was lost from the earth. Mormonism is its restoration, (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 182-185.)
- b. Consists of laws and ordinances: "As these sins are the result of individual acts it is just that forgiveness for them should be conditioned on individual compliance with prescribed requirements -- 'obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel,'" (*Articles of Faith*, p. 79)

#### **12. Heaven**

- a. There are three levels of heaven: telestial, terrestrial, and celestial, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 348).

13. **Holy Ghost, The**

- a. The Holy Ghost is a male personage, A Marvelous Work and a Wonder, (Le Grand Richards, Salt Lake City, 1956, p. 118; *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, p. 179).

14. **Jesus**

- a. The first spirit to be born in heaven was Jesus, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 129).
- b. Jesus and Satan are spirit brothers and we were all born as siblings in heaven to them both, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 163; *Gospel Through the Ages*, p. 15).
- c. Jesus' sacrifice was not able to cleanse us from all our sins, (murder and repeated adultery are exceptions), (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 3, 1856, p. 247).
- d. "Therefore we know that both the Father and the Son are in form and stature perfect men; each of them possesses a tangible body . . . of flesh and bones," (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 38).
- e. "The birth of the Saviour was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood - was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers," (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 8, p. 115).
- f. "Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers," (*Mormon Doctrine*, by Bruce McConkie, p. 547).
- g. "Christ Not Begotten of Holy Ghost ...Christ was begotten of God. He was not born without the aid of Man, and that Man was God!" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, by Joseph Fielding Smith, 1954, 1:18).
- h. "Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh..." (*First Presidency and Council of the Twelve*, 1916, "God the Father," compiled by Gordon Allred, p. 150).

15. **Joseph Smith**

- a. If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation [the context is the full gospel including exaltation to Godhood] outside the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 670).

16. **Pre-existence**

- a. We were first begotten as spirit children in heaven and then born naturally on earth, (*Journal of Discourse*, vol. 4, p. 218).
- b. The first spirit to be born in heaven was Jesus, (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 129).
- c. The Devil was born as a spirit after Jesus "in the morning of pre-existence," (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 192).

17. **Prophets**

- a. We need prophets today, the same as in the Old Testament, (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 444-445).

18. **Salvation**

- a. "One of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation," (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, Spencer W. Kimball, p. 206).
- b. A plan of salvation was needed for the people of earth so Jesus offered a plan to the Father and Satan offered a plan to the father but Jesus' plan was accepted. In effect the Devil wanted to be the Savior of all Mankind and to "deny men their agency and to dethrone god," (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 193; *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, p. 8).
- c. Jesus' sacrifice was not able to cleanse us from all our sins, (murder and repeated adultery are exceptions), (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 3, 1856, p. 247).
- d. Good works are necessary for salvation (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 92).
- e. There is no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith as a prophet of God (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, p. 188).
- f. "The first effect [of the atonement] is to secure to all mankind alike, exemption from the penalty of the fall, thus providing a plan of General Salvation. The second effect is to open a way for Individual Salvation whereby mankind may secure remission of personal sins (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 78-79).
- g. "As these sins are the result of individual acts it is just that forgiveness for them should be conditioned on individual compliance with prescribed requirements -- 'obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel,'" (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 79).
- h. "This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts," (*LDS Bible Dictionary*, p. 697).
- i. "We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do," (2 Nephi 25:23).

#### 19. **Trinity, The**

- a. The trinity is three separate Gods: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. "That these three are separate individuals, physically distinct from each other, is demonstrated by the accepted records of divine dealings with man," (*Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p. 35.).

God. I say that is a strange God [anyhow]--three in one and one in three. . .It is curious organization... All are crammed into one God according to sectarianism (Christian faith). It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God--he would be a giant or a monster," (Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, p. 372).

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