



WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL
Volume 14 Number 34
September 11, 2019

Why I Am Not a Mormon: Part 2

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In part one of this series (See: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2019/07/why-i-am-not-a-mormon-part-1>), I related how, as young man, I occasionally interacted with members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons/LDS) and engaged that church's missionaries in discussions. As I said, I found much about the LDS and its people that was positive. I was impressed by Mormons' high moral standards and strong families. On numerous occasions, various Mormons have asked me, "Since you find our church appealing, wouldn't you like to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Don't you want to be in God's true church?" Because of those challenges, I became interested in the beliefs and practices of that religious movement. So I began a deep investigation into Mormonism.

That led to a lifelong ministry of researching Mormonism and other religious groups. My research of the history and beliefs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints led me to uncover many troubling facts that the LDS people I knew, and the missionaries I encountered, never discussed. I even wondered if they were even aware of them. I got the feeling the LDS was not keen on exposing its members to some of its historical and theological problems.

In this series I enumerate some of the problems I discovered about Mormonism. I will explain why I came to believe the truth claims of Mormonism and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are unsupported by history, science, and, most importantly, the Bible. In the first installment

we examined my discoveries about the history and official scriptures of the LDS. In this section I will relate further how I continued my analysis of that faith by focusing on its essential doctrines and evaluating them biblically and scientifically. This will even more clarify why I am *not* a Mormon.

The Mormon Doctrine of God

I was raised in a liberal Christian church. It was not until I was in high school and was exposed to evangelical Christianity through friends in Campus Crusade for Christ, and by watching Billy Graham, that I made a commitment to Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. Nonetheless, I had learned enough about what the Bible taught about God to prepare me to accept Christ. I knew little, however, about the nature of God as a Trinity, and about His attributes (omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and eternity). My knowledge of God grew as I studied the Bible and learned more about Him. Eventually I acquired a pretty good understanding. I assumed all churches calling themselves Christian agreed with those tenets of deity. Then, in college, I met the Mormon missionaries.

In my conversations with the LDS elders (the official title of male Mormon missionaries) and in my research, I found out that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had a totally different concept of what God is like. I discovered that the LDS teaches that God is a man with a physical body. That is, he is literally an exalted male human being. He actually dwells on a planet near a star called Kolob. I was shocked to realize that the Mormon God was not omnipresent, infinite, or eternal, and he did not create the universe. In fact, no one or no thing created the

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universe at all. According to Mormonism the universe had no beginning and is eternal and infinite. That fact led me to conclude that, in Mormonism, God did not create the universe, the universe created God!

I heard from the missionaries that Joseph Smith, Jr. taught that God (who Mormons affectionately call "Heavenly Father" or "Elohim") has a physical body of flesh and bone. He famously said, "If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible – I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form" (Joseph Fielding Smith: Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977. p. 345). Not only that, I learned Heavenly Father is married and has a wife (or wives) who is our Heavenly Mother!

Furthermore, I was even more surprised to find out that Mormonism asserts that Elohim, our Heavenly Father, was once a mortal man like us. Thousands of years ago, he lived on another world and, like us now, had a Heavenly Father and Mother of his own. Because Elohim was worthy, his god elevated him to godhood to procreate and populate his own planet (earth) and to be our Heavenly Father. Thus, we are literally the offspring of God and his wife.

I learned also that Mormonism denies the historic Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Yes, Mormons talk a lot about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but in their view, they are three totally separate entities or gods. "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost (KJV

translation of Holy Spirit) could not dwell in us" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). I discovered also that, along with these three deities, innumerable other gods exist in the Mormon universe. This means, as I was stunned to learn, Mormonism is a polytheistic religion, not monotheistic like historic Christianity, Judaism, or even Islam.

If that was not enough to convince me of Mormonism's unorthodoxy, I learned that the LDS teaches that humans (you and me) can also attain godhood just as did Elohim.

"Every person who was ever born on earth is our spirit brother or sister. Because we are the spirit children of God, we have inherited the potential to develop His divine qualities. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can become like our Heavenly Father and receive a fulness of joy." (Gospel Principles [2011], The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.)

This means that if we fulfill all the necessary requirements, as taught and practiced only in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we may become like Heavenly Father and be gods and goddesses of our own planets! We will enumerate the content of those requirements in the next installment.

Given these startling facts about what the LDS believes about God, I decided that I could not accept Mormonism as true, and certainly not as biblical. The historic Christian concept is based on what is revealed in the Old Testament, and more fully revealed in the New Testament. Only one God exists (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:8-12; 44:6-8; 45:5). He is Yahweh (I AM), Elohim (the LORD God), the Infinite Eternal all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of the universe, including all time, space, matter, and energy. Remarkably, in the 20th century, the modern sciences of physics and astronomy confirmed the Bible's teaching that the universe

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had a beginning, came from nothing, and is finite.

Furthermore, the Bible teaches that God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. He exists eternally in Three Infinite and Eternal Persons; the Father, the Son (see below), and the Holy Spirit. This is what Christians call the Holy Trinity, and is the most basic of all Christian doctrines. (see Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:3-14). The New Testament indicates that the Holy Spirit is both a person and fully God. He is capable of speaking, teaching, grieving, and being lied to (but not being fooled). (see Matt. 12:31-32; 28:19; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:12; John 14-16; Acts 5:3-10; 13:2-4; Rom. 8:4, 26-27; 1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 2:18-19; 4:30; 5:18-21)

The Mormon Jesus

In my conversations with the LDS missionaries and other Mormons, they always referred to Jesus Christ as "the Savior." They affirmed his sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead. So in my early encounters, I assumed their view of Jesus was essentially the same as other Christian churches. However, as I read LDS sources and researched their beliefs, I came to realize that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has an entirely different understanding than do historic Christian churches of just who Jesus was, who He now is, and what He accomplished. Though the LDS generally affirms the details of the life of Jesus as recorded in the Four Gospels, I discovered many deviations in what Mormonism teaches about his nature, divinity, and atonement.

What I learned about the Mormon doctrine of Christ was astounding. Mormonism says Jesus was the spiritual "firstborn" Son of God, the Heavenly Father. They teach that all people are born in a preexistent spir-

itual realm before being born physically on earth. "God is not only our Ruler and Creator; He is also our Heavenly Father. All men and women are literally the sons and daughters of God." "Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal [physical] body" (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith [1998], 335).

"And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21). I discovered that Mormonism teaches Jesus was literally the "firstborn" of all humans born to the Heavenly Father and his wife in the pre-existent, pre-earth spirit life. After him were procreated billions of other spirit children (that is, us). Thus, Jesus was, as Mormons like to say, our "elder brother."

I learned that Mormonism also asserts that Jesus was the "only begotten" physical offspring of God by physical procreation on earth. The Mormon church believes that Jesus was the only person on earth to be born of a mortal mother and an immortal father (Elohim). That is why they call him the "Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh." Thus, according to Mormon doctrine, the Heavenly Father impregnated Mary to carry his only earthly physical offspring, Jesus. Therefore, Jesus was literally the physical "Son of God" and the only person qualified to make atonement for Adam's Fall. (More about this aspect of Jesus' mission according to Mormonism in Part 3.)

My research led me to conclude that these doctrines were wrong for three reasons. To start with, neither the Old nor New Testaments say anything about a pre-earth spiritual birth and life for human beings, or about a

Mother God in Heaven. Joseph Smith apparently made those doctrines up and put them in his extra-biblical scriptures.

Second, the term "firstborn" (Greek: *prototokos*), as used in the New Testament, does not mean the first born in time (except in Luke 2:7 with reference to Mary's first time to give birth). It primarily means Christ is the highest in authority, or pre-eminent, above all things (see Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 1:5).

Third, as we discussed in part one, the LDS uses only the King James Version (KJV) Bible. Here is another possible reason why they still do so. It has to do with the phrase translated "only begotten Son" in that version (Greek: *monogenes hyios*, as in John 3:16). Most newer translations more accurately render it as "one and only Son," or simply "only Son," not "only begotten." (see NIV, HCSB, NRSV, et. al.). The LDS uses the phraseology of the KJV to describe Jesus as having been physically sired by Heavenly Father and Mary (the KJV certainly does not intend this interpretation). That usage not only misconstrues the meaning of the phrase in the Greek, but also implies a relationship between them that is offensive to Christian sensibilities.

The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus is the eternal, preexistent Word (*Logos*) of God. He is the second Person of the Holy Trinity. Jesus was, is, and always shall be God. He was not the first spiritual son of God and his wife. And, contrary to what I learned about the Mormon doctrine of Jesus' conception, He was miraculously conceived on earth to the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, not by a physical fertilization by a physical Father God (Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 1:34-35).

While on earth, Jesus had two natures: human and divine. He lived a perfect, sinless life, and was crucified on a Roman cross between two thieves as a substitutionary atonement for mankind's sin. Jesus rose from the dead physically on the third day and is ascended to heaven (see John 1:1-18; 5:17-18; 8:56-59; 10:30-33; 17:5; Col. 1:15-17; 2:9). Someday He will return in glory to establish the eternal Kingdom of God.

Conclusion to Part Two

My research into these aspects of Mormon theology led me to the conclusion that the concepts of God and the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day saints are totally contrary to those taught in the Bible. The LDS has unbiblical concepts of God the Father, the nature and work of Jesus Christ, and nature of the Holy Spirit. For me these issues presented insurmountable problems to even consider becoming a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Moreover, these unorthodox doctrines clearly place the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints outside the boundaries of historic Christianity.

What I had discovered to this point in my study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' history, its scriptures, and, most importantly, its essential theology, all convinced me it was wrong. But that was not the end of my journey. In the next installment we will delve more into my research on what Mormonism teaches. We will analyze the LDS doctrines of salvation and life after death. They are more reasons why I am *not* a Mormon.

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