

## So What's the Difference?

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### Chapter Nine: Mormonism: As God Is, Man Can Become



<http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/saltlake/gallery/download.php?id=233>

#### **PLUMB LINE: 1 Cor. 15:3-4**

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...he was buried...he was Raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

#### **Introduction**

- Mormonism is the **fastest** growing and most successful cult in the history of the United States.
- Mormonism is officially known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (**LDS**).
- Mormonism reached 10.6 million members worldwide in 1999.
- Mormons strongly insist that they do not fit the definition of a cult.
- Cults reject the **Trinity**.

- Cults usually believe that all Christian churches are **wrong** and that their group has the only real truth about God.
- Cults claim to believe the Bible but they distort its teachings to suit their own peculiar view of mankind, God, the Holy Spirit, heaven and hell, salvation and many other doctrines.
- Cults usually find the source of these peculiar beliefs in their leaders, who claim to have new **interpretations** of the Bible or even valuable additions to it.
- Cults deny that people can be saved by faith in Christ alone.
- They teach their members that they can make themselves right with God through **good works** and through obedience to the doctrines and requirements the cult has set down as “God’s will” for their lives.



<http://www.newsshopper.co.uk/news/features/kindness/questions/>

- Cults are skillful at using Christian **terminology**, but they are not talking the same language as biblical Christians.
- Words like “God,” “Christ,” “faith,” “sin,” “salvation,” etc., mean entirely **different** things to a cultist and a Christian.
- The first task, then, when sharing your faith with someone who seems to have different ideas, is to define terms.

- Mormonism disagrees with biblical Christianity at many points, but two of the major issues are:
  - What is **authoritative** revelation (Scripture)?
  - Who (or what) is God?

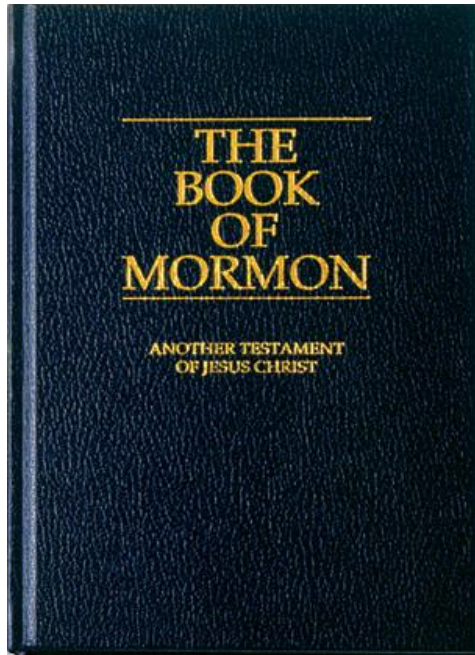
### **Joseph Smith, Jr.: How It All Began**



[http://ilo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Smith,\\_Jr.](http://ilo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Smith,_Jr.)

- The story of Mormonism started when a 14-year-old boy named Joseph Smith, Jr., had a vision in which two personages-whom he believed to be the Father and the Son-appeared before him.
- He asked them which Christian denomination he should join and they told him to join none of them because they were all "**wrong and corrupt.**" (God has always had a people).
- In 1823, Smith, then 17, saw the angel Moroni appear at his bedside and tell him of a book written on golden plates by former inhabitants of the continent that would contain "the fullness of the everlasting gospel."

- Four years later, Smith dug up the plates and began translating their “**Reformed Egyptian**” writing with the help of two special stones called “Urim” and “Thummim.”
- As Smith translated the plates, he sat behind a curtain, gazing into a hat, supposedly reading lines of the **Book of Mormon** (BOM) as they appeared on “seer stones” and dictating each line to a scribe outside the curtain.



<http://bookofmormonresearch.org/>

- It should be noted that as a youth and young man, Joseph was a well-known hunter for buried treasure with the aid of a seer (or peep) stone.
- Evidence shows that in 1826 Smith was convicted of “**glass looking**” (using a seer stone), a misdemeanor, because those who did scrying were often con men.
- Martin Harris, a wealthy **farmer** assisting Smith, decided to check and see if the plates and translation were genuine.
- He showed a sample to Professor Charles Anthon of **Columbia College** and reported back to Smith that Anthon recognized the characters he had been shown as “Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic,” and that the translation was “correct.”

- Anthon later learned of Harris’s report and wrote a lengthy letter to Mr. E.D. Howe, a prolific researcher of Joseph Smith and the origins of **Mormonism**.
- The gist of Anthon’s letter to Howe was, “The whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be ‘Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics’. Anthon well remembered “that the paper contained **anything else but** ‘Egyptian hieroglyphics.’”
- By 1830, Smith had published the BOM, financed by Martin Harris. From 1831 to 1844, Smith established Mormon strongholds in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois. Wherever they went, the Mormons drew hostility and **persecution**.



<https://www.ezilon.com/maps/north-america/united-states-of-america-maps.html>

- From the early 1830s to the early 1840s, Smith continued to receive **revelations** that guided him in where to go and what to do next. The books of revelations are titled *Book of Commandments* and *Doctrine and Covenants* which would become “inspired Scripture” alongside the BOM.
- By 1838, the Mormons had been driven completely from Missouri into **Illinois**. He established the thriving city of Nauvoo. It was here that Smith came up with revelations concerning the Godhead, origin and destiny of the human race, eternal progression, baptism for the dead, plural marriage (polygamy) and sacred temple ordinances.

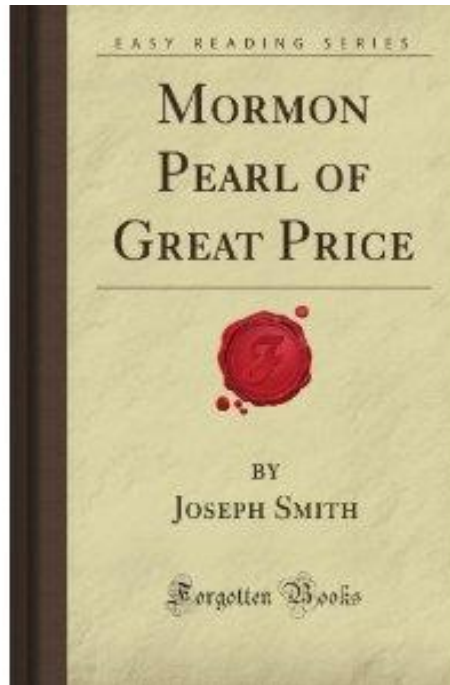
- Smith landed in **jail** for his views. A crowd of around 200 attacked the building, and a gunfight erupted. Smith died in this battle while using a six-shooter. Mormons believe that he died as a “Christian martyr.”
- Following Joseph Smith’s death, **Brigham Young** won a power struggle for leadership and led a large number of LDS west, where they settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847. Under Young, **polygamy** became a formal practice of the church, and he himself had 20 wives and fathered 57 children.



<http://ushistoryimages.com/brigham-young.shtml>

- Despite all their troubles with the **United States** government over polygamy, the Latter Day Saints built a prosperous church and society under the ironfisted rule of Brigham Young, who advocated the death penalty for any White mixing blood with a “Negro” and taught that Jesus had been conceived through literal sexual relations between God the Father and the Virgin Mary.
- Mormonism bases their definition of “Christian” on four “**standard works**” of Scripture. Besides the Bible, Mormons trust the BOM, *Doctrine and Covenants* and the *Pearl of Great Price* as containing the word of God.

## Pearl of Great Price



[http://www.mormonwiki.com/Pearl\\_of\\_Great\\_Price](http://www.mormonwiki.com/Pearl_of_Great_Price)

- The LDS Church claims the biblical canon never closed and revelation continued with **Joseph Smith**, as well as other presidents/prophets of the church, right up to the present day.

### **Is The Book Of Mormon Correct?**

- The BOM covers the history of two great civilizations, which supposedly arrived in America from the Middle East around 600 B.C. Two great nations, the **Nephites** and the Lamanites, fought intermittently over many centuries.
- Most of the BOM was allegedly put down on gold plates by **Mormon**, commander in chief of the Nephites. After completing his part of the account, Mormon gave the plates to his son, Moroni, who hid them in the Hill Cumorah after adding a few words of his own. The Nephites then fought the Lamanites to the death and all were killed. The Lamanites went on to become the “principal ancestors of the **American Indians**.”

**Moroni**



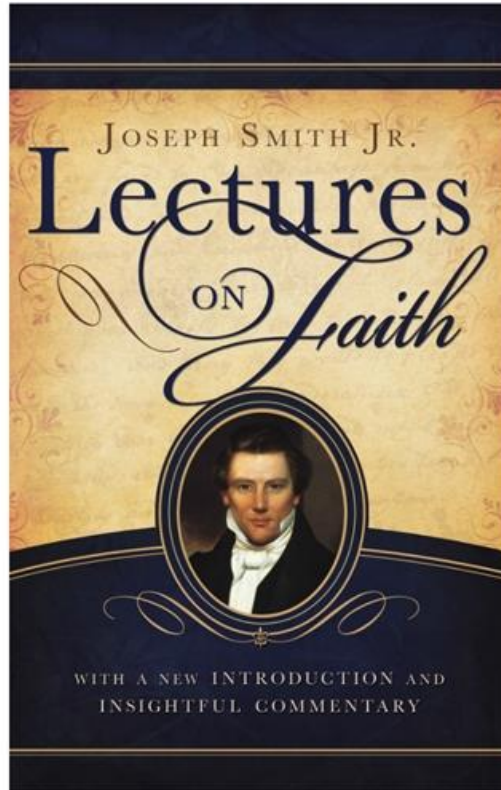
- The BOM speaks of at least **38** “mighty cities,” these cities have never been found.
- No institution of higher learning in America except Brigham Young University tries to substantiate or support the BOM.
- There are no **manuscripts** for the BOM. According to Joseph Smith, the gold plates were taken back by the angel Moroni, and Mormons simply rely on his “word as a prophet.”

### **Mormon Theology Goes Beyond The BOM**

- Joseph Smith claimed that the BOM was the most **complete** book on Earth and that it contains “the fullness of the gospel.” He then added 13 key Mormon doctrines in *Doctrine and Covenants* that aren’t found anywhere in the BOM.
- Mormon Church officials have made many changes themselves, including deletion of “**Lectures of Faith**,” in which Smith clearly taught that God has no beginning or end and is unchangeable-direct contradictions of what Mormon theology teaches today.

### **Lectures on Faith**





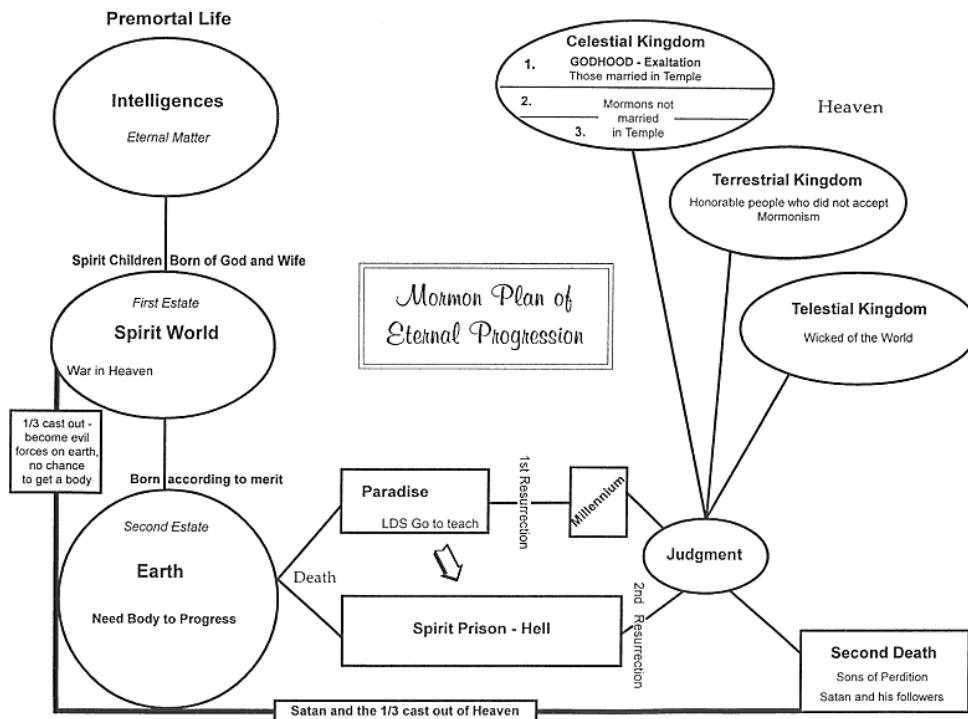
<https://ldsbookstore.com/lectures-on-faith>

### **The “Pearl” With A Hugh Blemish**

- The PGP was translated (in part) from **papyri fragments**, which Smith bought, along with some Egyptian mummies, from a traveling lecturer in 1835.
- According to Smith, the Egyptian hieroglyphics on the parchment were a record of writings by Abraham while he was in Egypt.
- These fragments turned up in 1967. Investigation of the fragments by Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists showed that the papyri contained nothing more than an Egyptian **funeral text** with instructions to embalmers.
- Undismayed by this scientific evidence, *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism* unblushingly states that when Smith looked at the Egyptian hieroglyphics on the piece of papyrus, he “sought revelation from the Lord” and “received the **Book of Abraham.**”

### **Eternal Progression: Heart Of Mormonism**

- The Mormon's believe that God is "**progressive**," having attained His exalted state by advancing along a path that His children (Mormons) are permitted to follow. "As man is, God once was: as God is, man may be."



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/801640802393600997/>

- Mormons believe that Father-God, the present God of our universe, was **created**, he became a spirit-being who grew to full maturity and was then sent to a planet other than Earth where he lived as a man. Having attained **Godhood**, he returned to a heavenly abode with a body of flesh and bones, where he joined with his goddess wife (Mother-God) to have millions of spirit children who would eventually populate planet Earth.
- Jesus was the firstborn of the **spirit children**. Lucifer was Jesus' brother.
- Mormon apostles strongly imply that Jesus did **marry** and commit polygamy being wed to Mary, Martha and the other Mary during the wedding at Cana. They teach that Jesus had children by the women he married before He died on the cross.
- Just like Jesus, all those who are born to Earth come from the spirit world where they have been **waiting** in the preexistence for their turn at earthly experience. If

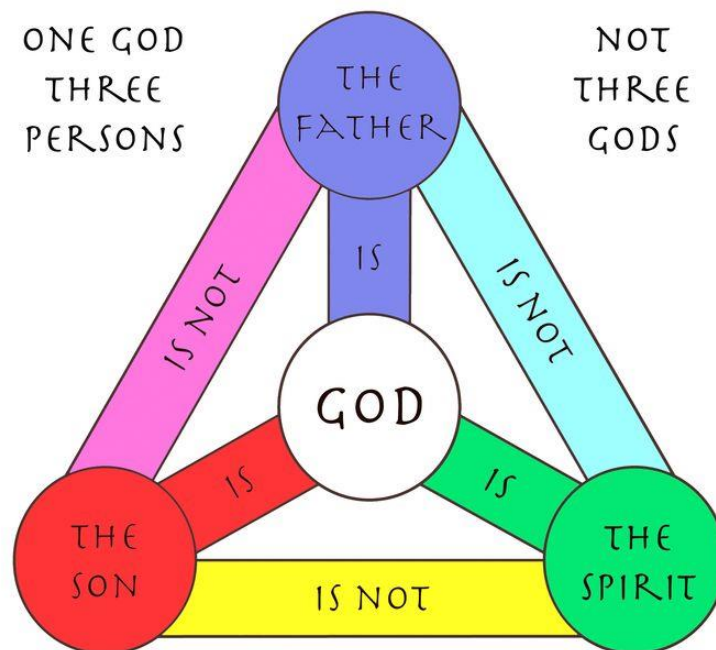
they take part in celestial marriage (being married in a Mormon temple), a man and his wife can eventually have their own planet.

- Mormons believe that there are many gods (polytheism). Smith taught, “You have got to learn to become Gods yourselves...the same as all Gods have done before you-namely, by going from one small degree to another.” The Bible, however clearly teaches, “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me” (Isa. 43:10); “I am God, and not man” (Hos. 11:9); “I the Lord do not change” (Mal. 3:6).

### Other Major Mormon Errors

- The Trinity is made up of three Gods. Smith made light of the Trinity, saying, “It would make a strange God anyhow. He would be a giant or a monster.”

### Christian View of the Trinity



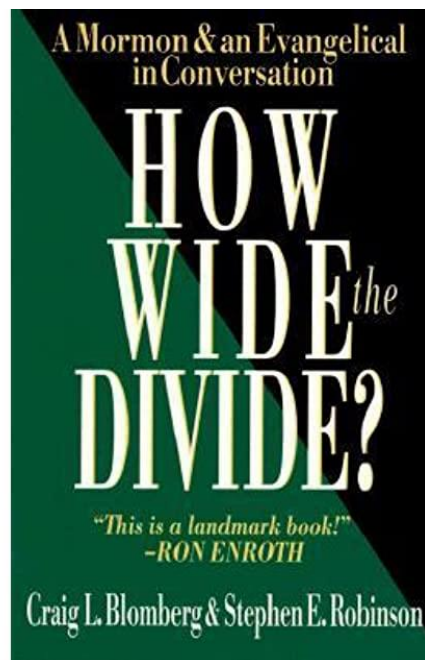
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- Salvation comes in two parts: general and individual.
- General salvation is what Mormons mean when they say, “We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved.”
- General salvation is given regardless of a person’s actions or beliefs.
- Because Christ’s atonement paid for Adam’s sins only, people are still responsible for their personal sins.

- Christ's atonement provides the **opportunity**, then, to earn individual salvation by obeying the laws and ordinances of the gospel (i.e., the teachings of the LDS church).
- Mormons list **eight** requirements that must be met if a person is to merit forgiveness from personal sins and thereby attain godhood.
- Some of these include: faith in Christ, being baptized, becoming a member of the LDS church, keeping the commandments, doing temple work and accepting **Joseph Smith** and his successors as "God's mouthpiece."

### How Wide Is The Divide?

- *How Wide the Divide?* This is a book that contains a dialogue between Stephen E. Robinson, professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, and Craig L. Bloomberg, professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary.



[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/290723.How\\_Wide\\_the\\_Divide\\_](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/290723.How_Wide_the_Divide_)

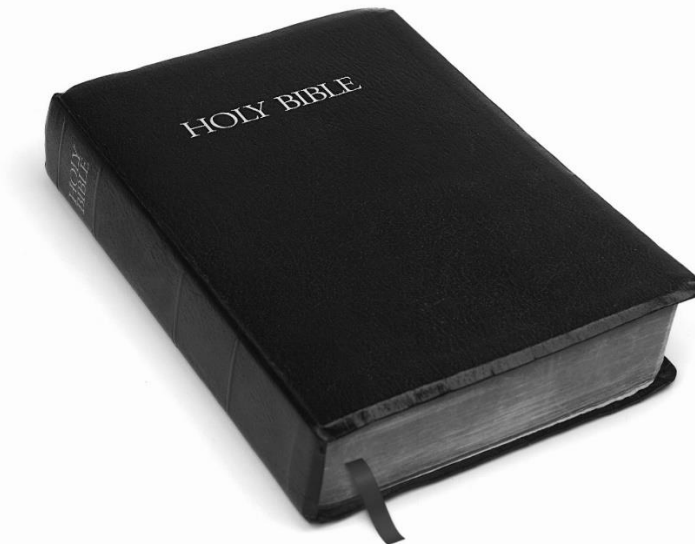
- As he dialogues with Bloomberg, Robinson corrects, "interprets" or **dismisses** as speculative almost all of earlier Mormon teachings used as examples of what Mormons have believed since 1830.
- Robinson strongly insists that "there is not a single verse of the Bible the Latter Day Saints do not accept,"; but in many places he makes it clear that LDS reject the **Greek** philosophy they believe is in the Creeds hammered out by Early Church councils.
- While Robinson admits he is not representing the LDS Church but only giving his own opinions, he adamantly insists that what he says is standard LDS theology.

- Not many **current** LDS General Authorities seem to agree with Robinson.

## **Summing Up Major Differences Between Mormonism And biblical Christianity**

### **Regarding Scripture:**

- The Mormons believe that the canon of Scripture **is not** closed and that “modern revelation is necessary...(God) continues to speak.
- Biblical Christians hold that the canon **is** closed and accept only the Bible as Scripture, believing it is “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16; Jude 3; Gal. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:3).



<http://westerntradition.wordpress.com/2011/02/09/why-isnt-the-bible-in-the-great-books-collection/>

### **Regarding God and the Trinity**

- Christians believe in the “**trinity**” which means “three-in-oneness” (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19).

### **Regarding sin and salvation**

- General salvation means “all men are saved by **grace alone**.” Full (individual) salvation comes only through the LDS Church, and without the Mormon priesthood and continuous revelation, “there would be no salvation.”

- Biblical Christians believe salvation is a **free** gift, provided by God's grace for all who believe in Christ and His atoning work on the cross (Eph. 2:8-9).



<http://dynamic-prayer.blogspot.com/>

- Christians do good works **not** to earn salvation but because they have salvation (Rom. 3:24-26; Eph. 2:10).

### **Regarding heaven**

- Joseph Smith taught that most of mankind will enter one of three levels of heaven: telestial, terrestrial or celestial. Eternal life in **celestial** heaven is for Mormons only.
- Biblical Christians believe heaven is the dwelling place of God (Ps. 73:25), which will become home for **all** believers in Christ's full atonement for personal sins (1 John 4:10). To be in heaven is to be in Christ's presence (Luke 23:43; John 14:3; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 John 3:2).

# Group Discussion Questions

## Week Nine-Mormonism

### Discussion Questions

1. Acts 2:1-13 explains the account of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost. It states, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language." (Vs. 4-6)
  - A. How did this outward manifestation of the Holy Spirit differ from Joseph Smith's experience in translating the golden plates?
  - B. How did the leadership of the disciples differ from that of Brigham Young?
2. Paul explains the test of a true Apostle in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:12. It states, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles."
  - A. Compare or contrast the above passage with that of Joseph Smith.
  - B. Why has Mormonism grown so fast?
3. Paul states in Ephesians 3:3-5, "...that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery as I wrote before in brief." This mystery implied the Gospel was now being given to the Gentiles."
  - A. How did Paul's revelation differ from Joseph Smith's "Pearl of Great Price?"
  - B. What has been your experiences when witnessing or talking with a Mormon? Explain.