

Mormonism

In the past few years the American public has seen the rise of some very prominent Mormons, and that has led to a lot of questions about Mormonism. What do Mormons believe? What does the Bible have to say about these beliefs? Is Mormonism Biblical? Is Mormonism just another denomination of Christianity, or is it something entirely different?

With all of these questions swirling about I thought it might be a good idea to take some time and address the beliefs of the Latter-Day Saints (LDS). This paper can't possibly cover every aspect of Mormonism, but I would like to cover some of its most basic teachings.

By way of acknowledgments, I'd like to thank Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, the authors of the book *Mormonism 101*. Their thorough Biblical examination of Mormonism was extremely helpful, and I recommend their book to anyone who is trying to understand more about this belief system.

God The Father

Do Mormons and Christians worship the same God? The leadership of the Mormon church says that the answer is no. In fact, the Mormon god is quite different from the one that Christians are familiar with. For example:

“The false gods of Christendom bear the same names as the true Gods of the Bible. Beyond this they have little resemblance. They are described in the creeds that the Lord told Joseph Smith were “an abomination in his sight.”

“And be it remembered that the gods of the creeds, which are the gods of Christendom, are just as false as are the gods of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Muslims, Amorites, Hittites, or any other peoples, excepting only the members of the true church.”

Bruce McConkie (Mormon Apostle)

“In contrast [to ideas believed in Mormonism], many Christians reject the idea of a tangible, personal God and a Godhead of three separate beings. They believe that God is a spirit and that the Godhead is only one God. In our view, these concepts are the evidence of the falling away we call the Great Apostasy.”

Dallin H. Oaks (Mormon Apostle)

That is pretty strong language! Both of these LDS leaders claim that what Christendom teaches about God is entirely false. Oaks rejects both the Trinity and the idea that God is a spirit, and claims that the Godhead is composed of three separate beings.

However, the Bible's stance on this is pretty clear:

John 4:24: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:”

1 John 5:7: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

Does the Bible say that God is a Spirit? Yes, in John 4:24. Does the Bible say that there is just one God? Yes, in Deuteronomy 6:4. Does the Bible teach the doctrine of the Trinity – that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three persons but yet one being and one God? Yes, it certainly does, in I John 5:7. This is why Christians believe it: it is what the Bible teaches, and the Bible is very clear about it.

So immediately we see that the Mormon idea of God is quite different from the Biblical view of God. But the differences go much further than this. Mormons do not believe that God was always God. They teach that He had a beginning – that God had a father, and his father had a father, and so on:

“We were begotten by our Father in heaven; the person of Father in Heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by His Father; and, again, He was begotten by a still more ancient Father; and so on, from generation to generation.”

Orson Pratt (LDS Apostle)

In fact, they believe that God probably began life as a mortal, had a childhood, and eventually grew up to become the God that He is today:

“Remember that God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement; has moved forward and overcome, until He has arrived at the point where He now is.”

Orson Hyde (LDS Apostle)

This idea that God was an ordinary person who eventually grew to become God is quite shocking to Christians! That's because this Mormon doctrine is not even close to what the Bible teaches. This is what the Bible has to say about God:

Isaiah 44:6: “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

That's a pretty clear statement! God says that He is the first and the last; He did not have a father, nor did He have a beginning. God was also quite clear that He is the *only* God: there are no other beings like Him. He had no father, or grandfather, or great-grandfather; He is the one and only. This is important because Mormonism teaches that, just as God was a person who grew to become God, so we can grow and become gods ourselves:

“The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming Gods like Himself; when we have been proved in our present capacity, and been faithful with all things He puts into our possession. We are created, we are born for the express purpose of growing up from the low estate of manhood, to become Gods like unto our Father in heaven. That is the truth about it, just as it is. The Lord has organized mankind for the express purpose of increasing in that intelligence and truth, which is with God, until he is capable of creating worlds on worlds, and becoming Gods, even the sons of God.”

President Brigham Young

However, as we've seen in Isaiah 44:6, this is *not at all* what the Bible teaches. God was quite clear that “beside me there is no God.” We will never become equal with God; for all of eternity there will never be any other being like Him. God is entirely unique and *always will be*. This point is made over and over in the Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 4:35: “Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him. ...

39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.”

Isaiah 43:10: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”

Isaiah 46:9: “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:”

Do you see how clear the Bible is on this subject? It says over and over that “there is none else beside him”! God is the *only* God. Isaiah 43:10 states that “before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me” – thus refuting both the idea that God came from a long line of other gods, *and* the idea that one day we will be equal with God.

This brings up an interesting point: just who was it that told mankind that they could become like God? Why, it was Satan, back in the Garden of Eden:

Genesis 3:4: “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Mormonism makes the same promise that the serpent did: “ye shall be as gods.” But that is not what the Bible teaches.

Moreover, Mormonism teaches that God changes:

“Yet, if we accept the great law of eternal progression, we must accept the fact that there was a time when Deity was much less powerful than He is today. Then how did He become glorified and exalted and attain His present status of Godhood? In the first place, aeons ago God undoubtedly took advantage of every opportunity to learn the laws of truth and as He became acquainted with each new verity He righteously obeyed it.”

Milton R. Hunter

Once again we see the Mormon idea that God started out as an ordinary person and eventually earned His status of Godhood. However, the Bible is quite clear that God never, *ever* changes:

Malachi 3:6: “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

This idea is repeated over and over in the Bible. God *does not change*. He always has existed and He always will exist:

Psalms 90:2: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

Do you see what the Bible is saying? The Scriptures do not say that God had a humble beginning and eventually grew to become God; instead they teach that God was God “from everlasting to everlasting”! He is *eternal* and has *always* been God.

Mormonism also teaches that God is not omnipresent. They say that He cannot be everywhere at once:

“Some would have us believe that God is present everywhere. It is not so.”

President Brigham Young

If God was once a man who eventually became God then that would make sense, but that is not what the Bible teaches. The Scriptures really do teach that God is everywhere at once:

Proverbs 15:3: “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”

Jeremiah 23:23: “Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?
24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do

not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.”

The Bible is quite clear that God fills heaven and earth; He sees all and is everywhere at once.

It is clear from even this brief examination of the subject that the god of Mormonism is *very* different from the God of the Bible. The Mormon god was not always god, nor was he the first god; he is just the latest in a long line of gods. He had a beginning, and over time he grew and learned until he eventually obtained his current status as god. He is not a spirit, he is not the only god out there, and he is not everywhere at once.

The God of the Bible, on the other hand, is the *only* God, and has been God for all of eternity. He has no beginning and He has no end. He does not change or grow, for He is perfect and has always been perfect. He *is* a Spirit and He is everywhere at once.

These differences are quite profound. Mormons do *not* worship the same God that Christians do, and their whole concept of God directly contradicts what the Bible has to say about the subject.

Jesus

The Mormon idea of Jesus is radically different from the one that Christians are familiar with. First, Mormonism teaches that Jesus had to *attain* Godhood by being a good person. He wasn't always God:

“He [Jesus] is the Firstborn of the Father. By obedience and devotion to the truth he attained that pinnacle of intelligence which ranked him as God, as the Lord Omnipotent, while yet in his pre-existent state.”

Bruce McConkie (Mormon Apostle)

This idea that Jesus was once an ordinary person who eventually earned His position of Godhood goes against everything the Bible has to say about God. However, as I've already covered the Bible's teachings on God and the Trinity in the previous section, I won't repeat it all here. The Bible is clear that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God and have always existed; there was never a time when they were not God, and they never change.

But the differences go much deeper than that. Mormonism rejects the Christian idea of the Virgin Birth. Instead they teach that God and Mary had sex, and the product of their physical union was Jesus. I know this idea seems shocking but it has been repeated by many Mormon leaders:

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the most literal sense. The body in which He performed His mission in the flesh was sired by that same Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, nor was He begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father!”

Ezra Taft Benson

“Thus, God the Father became the literal father of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only person on earth to be born of a mortal mother and an immortal father.”

Gospel Principles

“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.”

Brigham Young

“I will say that I was naturally begotten; so was my father, and also my Saviour Jesus Christ. According to the Scriptures, he is first begotten of his father in the flesh, and there was nothing unnatural about it.”

Heber C. Kimball

“There is no need to spiritualize away the plain meaning of the scriptures. There is nothing figurative or hidden or beyond comprehension in our Lord's coming into mortality. He is the Son of God in the same sense and way that we are the sons of mortal fathers. It is just that simple.”

Bruce McConkie

The problem with all of this is that the Bible teaches that Jesus was born *of a virgin*. Logically, if Jesus was the product of a sexual relationship between Mary and God then He was *not* born of a virgin. After all, virgin is someone who has *never had sex!* This is really pretty straightforward:

Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Notice how it says that *a virgin* shall conceive. If Jesus was the result of sexual intercourse then He was not born of a virgin, was he?

This is what the Bible *actually* says about the conception of Jesus:

Luke 1:35: “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Mormonism says “No, it wasn't the Holy Ghost. God just impregnated Mary in the same way that husbands impregnate their wives. There was nothing unusual about it.” To say that the Mormon stance is unbiblical is putting it mildly; it is a gross perversion of what the Bible teaches about the virgin birth.

Mormonism also teaches that Jesus and Lucifer were brothers. In fact, Lucifer actually wanted to be the savior of mankind, but Jesus got the honor instead:

“Long before you were born a program was developed by your creators. ... The principal personalities in this great drama were a Father Elohim, perfect in wisdom, judgment, and person, and two sons, Lucifer and Jehovah.”

Spencer W. Kimball

“The appointment of Jesus to be the Savior of the world was contested by one of the other sons of God. He was called Lucifer ... this spirit-brother of Jesus desperately tried to become the Savior of mankind.”

Milton R. Hunter

Does the Bible really say that God had two children, Jesus and Satan, and that Satan tried desperately to be our savior? Absolutely not! I've already shown earlier that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, and they have always existed and will always exist. Satan is *not* a part of the trinity. He is a created being, and in fact he was created by Jesus. This means that he *cannot* be Jesus' brother:

John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

Do you notice what it says in verse 3? *All things* were made by Jesus. Everything in this universe was created by Him, including the angels – of which Satan is one. The Bible says that Jesus was the eternal God, without beginning or end, while Satan is a being that was created *by* Jesus. *They are not brothers.*

Preexistence

Mormonism teaches that before we were born we lived in heaven – the offspring of heavenly parents. However, in order to grow we left heaven and were born on earth as physical beings:

“Our heavenly parents provided us with a celestial home more glorious and beautiful than any place on earth. We were happy there. Yet they knew we could not progress beyond a certain point unless we left them for a time. They wanted us to develop the godlike qualities that they have. To do this, we needed to leave our celestial home to be tested and to gain experience. We needed to choose good over evil. Our spirits needed to be clothed with physical bodies. We would need to leave

our physical bodies at death and reunite with them in the Resurrection. Then we would receive immortal bodies like those of our heavenly parents. If we passed our tests, we would receive the fulness of joy that our heavenly parents have received.”

Bruce McConkie

This is why Mormons taught for a long time that people should have as many children as possible, in order to provide bodies for spirits that were waiting in heaven:

“There are multitudes of pure and holy spirits waiting to take tabernacles, now what is our duty? - To prepare tabernacles for them; to take a course that we will not tend to drive those spirits into the families of the wicked, where they will be trained in wickedness, debauchery, and every species of crime. It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can.”

Brigham Young

In other words, Mormons believe that there are millions of spirits in heaven that are just waiting to be born. Mormons were told to have large families so that these waiting spirits would be placed into Mormon homes. This is why President Joseph F. Smith called birth control one of the greatest crimes in the world.

This idea is completely alien to Christians. Nowhere does the Bible say that there are countless spirits in heaven just waiting to be born on earth, nor does it say that spirits are created by the union of two other spirits. These are all completely foreign concepts! God made it quite clear that we weren't waiting around in Heaven when God created the world. Instead we were nowhere to be found:

Job 38:4: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.”

Mormons try to use a number of passages to claim that the Bible teaches this concept. One verse they use is this one:

Jeremiah 1:5: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

Mormons say that this verse proves that Jeremiah existed before he was born. However, that's not what this verse is saying at all. Notice it says that Jeremiah was formed in the *womb* of his mother – not in some heavenly preexistence! It doesn't say “Before I took your spirit out of heaven and put you in the womb of your mother I knew you.” What God is saying is that before Jeremiah even existed, God knew him and had a destiny for him.

Another verse that is used to as evidence for a pre-birth existence is this one:

Ecclesiastes 12:7: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Mormons argue that this is evidence for preexistence, but all it is really saying is that after death our spirit goes to God. This is because God is the one who forms our spirit:

Zechariah 12:1: “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.”

Notice it doesn't say our spirit is the offspring of a spirit father and a spirit mother! *God* forms our spirits. They are formed *in the womb*, and after death they return to God. Some go on to everlasting life, while others go on to everlasting torment.

What you *don't* find in the Bible is a statement that says “Before you were conceived in the womb you existed in spirit form in heaven, and you were sent to earth so you could grow spiritually.” Nor do you find any verses that say “Your spirit is the offspring of a spirit father and mother, who are waiting for you back in heaven.” Those concepts are simply not found in the Bible. Another way to put it is that this Mormon doctrine is unbiblical.

The Fall

Mormonism teaches that the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden was actually a good thing. It states that Eve made the right decision in choosing to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit, and that mankind was greatly blessed because of this:

“Some Christians condemn Eve for her act, concluding that she and her daughters are somehow flawed by it. Not the Latter-day Saints! Informed by revelation, we celebrate Eve's act and honor her wisdom and courage in the great episode called the Fall.”

Dallin H. Oaks (Mormon Apostle)

This brings up a question: was God pleased that Eve ate of the fruit? Was He delighted that mankind disobeyed Him? No, He was not! In fact, He cursed everyone involved, starting with the serpent:

Genesis 3:14: “And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: ...”

He cursed Eve:

Genesis 3:16: “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”

And He cursed Adam:

Genesis 3:17: “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

The Bible says that this one action brought death into the world:

Romans 5:12: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”

It goes further to say that *all of creation* is in pain because of what happened:

Romans 8:22: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

This act of disobedience resulted in curses for all parties involved, and it brought death, disease, suffering, and pain into the world. It took a perfect world and turned it into the world that we see today – a place filled with poverty, hunger, crime, war, and bloodshed. And yet we are to believe that Eve made the *right decision* and that God was delighted that mankind took Satan's advice? This Mormon doctrine flatly contradicts what the Bible has to say about the Fall.

One way that Mormonism tries to get around this is by saying that what Eve did was a “transgression”, and transgressions aren't sins:

“Some acts, like murder, are crimes because they are inherently wrong. Other acts, like operating without a license, are crimes only because they are legally prohibited. Under these distinctions, the act that produced the Fall was not a sin – inherently wrong – but a transgression – wrong because it was formally prohibited.”

Dallin Oaks (Mormon Apostle)

Does the Bible actually say that transgressions aren't sins? No, it does not:

1 John 3:4: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

In fact, the Bible actually says that this one act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden made us *sinners*:

Romans 5:18: “Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were **made sinners**, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

Do you see what these verses are saying? Sins *are* transgressions of God's law. That is the very *definition* of sin! God puts no difference between “sins” and “transgressions.” If you break God's law you are sinning, and that's the end of the story. This idea that God was hoping mankind would disobey God and obey Satan instead is completely unbiblical. The fall of mankind brought death, misery, and judgment upon all men and made us all sinners. That is why Jesus came to save us: apart from His sinless life, death, and resurrection there could be no salvation. Eve's choice was not wise; it was *devastating*, and we are still feeling its effects today.

The Cross

Mormonism teaches that the place where Jesus atoned for the sins of man was *not* on the cross. Instead it was actually in the Garden of Gethsemane:

“Forgiveness is available because Christ the Lord sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane as he bore the incalculable weight of the sins of all who ever had or ever would repent.”

Bruce McConkie (Mormon Apostle)

“[Christ] suffered as only God could suffer, bearing our griefs, carrying our sorrows, being wounded for our transgressions, voluntarily submitting Himself to the iniquity of us all, just as Isaiah prophesied (see Isaiah 53:4-6). It was in Gethsemane that Jesus took on Himself the sins of the world, in Gethsemane that His pain was equivalent to the cumulative burden of all men, in Gethsemane that He descended below all things so that all could repent and come to Him.”

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

“Where and under what circumstances was the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God made? Was it on the Cross of Calvary or in the Garden of Gethsemane? It is to the Cross of Christ that most Christians look when centering their attention upon the infinite and eternal atonement. And certainly the sacrifice of our Lord was completed when he was lifted up by men; also, that part of his life and suffering is more dramatic and, perhaps, more soul stirring. But in reality the pain and suffering, the triumph and grandeur, of the atonement took place primarily in Gethsemane.”

Bruce McConkie (Mormon Apostle)

As McConkie says, Mormons believe that “the pain and suffering...of the atonement took place primarily in Gethsemane.” In fact, he is very dismissive of the idea that we are saved by Christ's death on the cross:

“Christians speak often of the blood of Christ and its cleansing power. Much that is believed and taught on this subject, however, is such utter nonsense and so palpably false that to believe it is to lose one's salvation. For instance, many believe or pretend to believe that if we confess Christ with our lips and avow that we accept him as our personal Savior, we are thereby saved. They say that his blood, without any other act than mere belief, makes us clean.”

Bruce McConkie (Mormon Apostle)

Here we get to the heart of the matter. Notice how he says that you can actually *lose your salvation* if you believe that salvation is “mere belief”, or if you believe that the blood of Jesus is all it takes to atone for your sins! Mormonism teaches that the blood of Jesus is *not enough* to save you. Let me repeat that: they state that belief in Jesus is *simply not enough*. You need something more in order to reach the celestial kingdom – specifically, good works and obedience to *all* of the Mormon laws. This is why you will not find crosses displayed in LDS churches.

The fact is, the Bible really *does* teach that belief in Jesus is how you are saved, or “made clean”:

Romans 10:9: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved.**
10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Notice there is *no mention of works* in any of those verses. You confess and believe, and that is *all there is to it*. The Bible is quite clear that works on our part are not involved in this cleansing process:

Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
9 **Not of works**, lest any man should boast.”

Do you see how direct that statement is? You could not get any clearer than this: we are saved *by grace through faith*, and this salvation is *not of works*. What cleanses us from our sins is Christ's *death*. As Romans says, we are justified *by His blood*:

Romans 5:8: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

Notice how it says that we are justified by *His blood*. This is because all of us are sinners, worthy of the wrath of God – and the penalty for sin is *death*. The reason we can be saved is because Jesus died in our place, taking upon Himself the punishment that we deserved. When we ask God to forgive our sins and believe in Jesus then He will forgive us, and at that point we are saved. Christ's death is all-important because it is His *death* – the sacrificial shedding of His blood – that paid the price for our sins. That is what justifies us.

It was not suffering in the garden that provided atonement, but the death *on the cross* – the very cross that Mormonism holds in such light esteem:

Galatians 6:14: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Colossians 1:20: “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

Colossians 2:14: “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”

The message of these verses are very clear: it is *through the blood of the cross* that we are reconciled to God. The cross of Christ is *central* to the gospel! It really is His blood that makes us clean. That is the very message of the gospel itself: our sins have been nailed to the *cross*. It is not Gethsemane that saves us; it is Christ's death on the cross.

This is where Mormonism gets into very dangerous territory. As we've already seen, they do not believe that “faith alone” is enough to save you. This has been spelled out in very explicit language:

“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.”

President Spencer Kimball

As we've seen, Romans 10:9-10 and Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us a very different story. Mankind *is* saved solely by the grace of God, and belief in Jesus *is* all that is needed for salvation. The Bible has very strong words for those who would add obedience to the law to salvation:

Galatians 2:21: “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Galatians 3:11: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.”

This is one of the key differences between Mormonism and Christianity. The Bible teaches that all of us are sinners (unlike Mormonism, which teaches that mankind is basically good):

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

Moreover, the penalty for sin is death:

Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This means that if our status does not change, we are all sinners that will face the wrath of God. However, the death of Jesus on the cross changed everything:

Romans 5:8: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be **saved from wrath** through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

Notice how much is said in these verses! Before Christ died we were the *enemies* of God. However, God reconciled us to Him *by the death of His Son*. It is Christ's *death* that saves us from the wrath of God. All of us need salvation, and that salvation can only come through Christ. This is because Christ is the only sacrifice that God will accept: someone had to die in our place, and Christ was the only sinless one that could do it. We all desperately need salvation, and that salvation can only come through faith in Christ.

Mormonism, on the other hand, teaches that men are basically good and are saved unconditionally, whether they believe in Jesus or not:

“Many aspects of God's grace are unconditional. For instance, one free gift of salvation is resurrection and immortality, given by Jesus Christ to all people who have lived on this earth. This gift is not affected by anything we do here. Everyone, from the most righteous to the most wretched, will be resurrected and will live forever in the next life ... By breaking the bands of death, Jesus Christ overcame death, and all will live again. In this respect, we are saved by grace unconditionally.”

Rex Lee

Mormonism teaches that Christ's death saved *everyone*. It doesn't matter if they believe in Jesus or not, and it doesn't matter if they have ever repented of their sins. They could spend their whole lives as devoted Satanists and it would not matter. Everyone who has ever lived is saved, and everyone will be resurrected and live forever. Now, it's true that Mormonism teaches that some people go to a better afterlife than others, but what determines that is *not* whether you believed in Jesus but whether you *led a good life* and kept the law perfectly. The better job you did keeping the law, the better resurrection you will obtain.

This is *not at all* what the Bible says. The Bible is quite clear that you can only be saved *if* you believe in Jesus:

Acts 16:30: “And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy

house.”

Notice how Paul did not say “You misunderstand; everyone is saved no matter what they do. If you want a better afterlife then you need to start keeping the law perfectly.” No, Paul was quite clear: in order to be saved from God's wrath you must *believe in Jesus*. The Lord clearly stated that many people were not going to do this, and because of that they would be lost forever:

Matthew 7:13: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and **many** there be which go in thereat:
14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few** there be that find it.”

Jesus said that there were *few* who would find the path that leads to life, while there were *many* who would go on to destruction! Revelation 20 tells us that there is a day of judgment coming, and all those who did not *believe in Jesus* will be sentenced to eternal torment in a place called the Lake of Fire:

Revelation 20:11: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

In case there is any confusion over this, verse 15 mentions the Book of Life. The names that are written in it are the names of those who have believed in Jesus, repented of their sins and accepted Him as their Lord and Savior. It is not a book of works, but a book of *faith*.

Now, it is not true that Mormons don't believe in Hell. Their doctrine is a bit more complicated than that. They believe in four possible eternal destinations:

- **Outer Darkness:** a place of torment. Only evil spirits, extremely wicked people, and apostate Mormons go here.
- **Telestial kingdom:** the wicked go here.
- **Terrestrial kingdom:** honorable people and “lukewarm Mormons” will go here.
- **Celestial kingdom:** this level is itself composed of three separate levels. Mormons hope to reach the highest level of this kingdom.

As we've said before, Mormonism teaches that what defines your eternal state is not your faith in Jesus but how you've lived your life. If you are a basically good person then you can make it to the terrestrial kingdom, even if you never came to trust Jesus at all. You don't even have to be a Mormon! However, if you want to attain the highest level of the Celestial Kingdom then you not only have to be a good and devout Mormon, but you must keep all of the commands perfectly. In other words, they teach that it is your *works* – your obedience to the entire law – that decide how things turn out. It's a very strict law, too: the simple act of drinking a cup of tea or smoking a cigarette could be all that it takes to prevent you from entering the celestial kingdom:

“Who will be saved in the celestial kingdom, and go into the presence of the Father and Son? *Those only who observe the whole law*, who keep the commandments of God – those who walk in newness of life, observe *all* his precepts and do his will.”

Brigham Young

“You cannot neglect little things. “Oh, a cup of tea is such a little thing. It is so little; surely it doesn't amount to much; surely the Lord will forgive me if I drink a cup of tea.” If you drink coffee or tea, or take tobacco, are you letting a cup of tea, or a little tobacco stand in the road and bar you from the celestial kingdom of God, where you might otherwise have received a fullness of glory?”

President Joseph Fielding Smith

Notice that it is not *faith in Jesus* that does the trick; instead it is your obedience to the law. If you want to reach the highest level of exaltation then you have to observe the “whole law.” This is salvation by works: if you want to go into the presence of God then you have to *earn* your way there.

The Bible does not teach any of this. As we've seen, it states that there are only two possible destinations: everlasting life with Jesus, and everlasting torment in the Lake of Fire. *All* those who never trusted in Jesus alone for salvation will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. On the other hand, all those whose names *are* written in the Book of Life will go on to spend eternity with the Lord. Those are your only two choices. It is not your works that will determine your final destination; it is your faith in Jesus, and *nothing else*.

The differences can be summed up like this: Mormonism teaches that Christ's death saved everyone and therefore everyone gets resurrected. However, everyone doesn't have the same afterlife. Your position in the resurrection is determined by how well you obeyed the entire law. If you have done all the right things and lived a good life then you will end up in a higher kingdom. However, if you were evil or wicked then you will end up in one of the lower ones, depending on just how wicked you actually were.

Christianity, on the other hand, teaches that the *only* way to avoid an eternity of unbearable torment is to *believe in Jesus*. It is not our works that saves us but our faith in Jesus Christ. If we believe in Jesus then we will be saved and will go on to be with God forever. However, if we reject God's offer of forgiveness then we will face His wrath, no matter what else we may have done during our life. *Everything* rests on our faith in Jesus.

There are a great many other facets of Mormonism that I have not touched on: their use of

extra-Biblical sources of revelation (Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, etc.); their view that baptism is required for salvation; their idea that marriage can extend beyond death; etc. However, I think I've gone far enough to show that Mormonism is completely different from Biblical Christianity, despite what Mormons might claim:

“Mormonism is Christianity; Christianity is Mormonism; they are one and the same, and they are not to be distinguished from each other in the minutest detail...Mormons are true Christians; their worship is pure, unadulterated Christianity authored by Christ and accepted by Peter, James, and John and all the ancient saints.”

Bruce McConkie (Mormon Apostle)

Mormonism is *not* the same thing as Christianity. It offers a completely different view of God, Jesus, salvation, the gospel, the resurrection, and the afterlife – one that is contrary to what the Bible teaches. Following the tenants of Mormonism will not lead to salvation: it is yet another part of the wide gate that leads many people to destruction. Mormons may hate it when people say they are not Christians, but the fact is they are not. I think this quote puts it well:

“It is not bigotry to say that a faith that denies the most basic of all Christian doctrines according to all the mainstream canons of Christianity qualifies as a non-Christian cult. That isn't bigotry. It is theology.”

(Jack Kinsella, The Omega Letter Intelligence Digest, Vol 121, Issue 11, 10/11/11).

I strongly urge people to flee from the unbiblical doctrines of Mormonism and instead “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”, as the Bible says in Jude 1:3. The Bible has not been corrupted, nor is it full of myths and fables: it is the inspired, infallible Word of God. I highly recommend trusting it. Believe in Jesus leads to salvation; belief in Mormonism leads only to Hell.