

Mormonism Notes

Mormonism (officially known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), based on the teachings of Joseph Smith, is a nontrinitarian “Christian” religion that believes that Christ came to help humanity achieve godhood. They believe that they are the restoration of the original church founded by Jesus Christ.

History

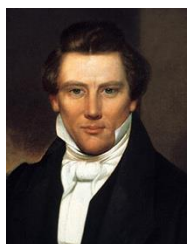
The history of Mormonism begins with *The Book of Mormon*, which tells of two different groups of Israelites who migrated from Israel to the Americas and also tells about the coming of Jesus.

The first part of *The Book of Mormon* tells the story of the prophet Lehi who received a vision from God in 600 BC. His vision told about the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC and the gospel of Christ that would be revealed one day. Lehi obediently obeyed God’s instructions to build a boat and take his family to the Americas.

After his death his older sons Laman and Lemuel rebelled against his chosen and godly son Nephi. The descendants of Laman and Lemuel eventually merged together into the tribe of the Lamanites who were cursed with the “skin of blackness” because of their rebellion against God. Over the many years that followed, the Lamanites warred against the Nephites, who were the chosen righteous line of God (the true Israelites). During this time the prophets of the Nephites continued to receive visions of Christ.

The second part (which takes place before the first part) tells of the prophet Jared who led a group of Hebrews from the Tower of Babel to the Americas hundreds of years before Lehi showed up in America. The Jaredites soon split into two factions and warred with one another for hundreds of years until they were all wiped out except for the prophet Ether. Ether predicted the coming of *The Book of Mormon* and the New Jerusalem that Jesus Christ would establish in the Americas. Eventually Ether discovered the Nephites and joined their tribe.

The third part (which takes place after the first part) records the coming of Jesus to the Americas after His death and resurrection in 34 AD. Jesus revealed himself to the people of the Americas and shared the gospel with them. Then Jesus ascended into heaven to be with Elohim. Only the Nephites responded in faith. As a result, the Nephites had peace for two hundred years. About three hundred years after Christ’s coming the prophet Mormon of the tribe of Nephite, upon seeing the moral and political decay of the Americas, gathered all the writings of the Nephites into one collection and carved them onto golden tablets. In 421 AD the dark skin Lamanites wiped out all the light skinned Nephites except for Moroni the son of Mormon. Moroni then took the golden tablets of Mormon and buried them at Mount Cumorah, which is located in modern day New York. It was the dark skin Lamanites who were living in the Americas when the Europeans first discovered the Americas.



The history of Mormonism continues in Joseph Smith’s account of his life in the book *Pearl of Great Price*, where he tells of his discovery of the golden tablets.

Joseph Smith (1805-1844) was born in Sharon, Vermont and in 1816 his family moved to Palmyra, New York, where Smith got caught up into the energy of the Second Great Awakening, the local religious folk magic, and occult practices.

Smith made his money as a soothsayer reading peoples futures and using a divining rod to find lost treasure.

Smith was confused about which denomination was the most correct and prayed to God to reveal the answer. In 1820 God the Father and Jesus appeared to him while he was in the woods and told him that all the churches had “turned aside from the gospel” and that all their doctrines were “an abomination.”

In 1823 the angel Moroni, who was the human Moroni who buried the golden tablets, appeared to him, led him to Mount Cumorah, and revealed to him the golden tablets of Mormon and the breastplate and Urim and Thummim, which were used by the Levitical priests to talk to God in the Old Testament. But the angel Moroni would not let him remove the golden tablets. So, for the next four years Smith would make an annual trip to Mount Cumorah in order to try and remove the golden tablets but was prevented by the angel Moroni.

During these four years Smith’s family faced serious financial hardship. Smith sold his skills to others to find lost treasure using a seer stone. Eventually he was prosecuted in court for fraud. In January of 1827 Smith eloped with Emma Hale. In September of 1827 Smith took his wife to Mount Cumorah and was finally allowed to remove the golden tablets of the prophet Mormon. The angel Moroni told him not to show them to anyone, but to translate and publish them. Smith claimed that they were written in reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphic (which does not exist), and he was capable of translating.

For the next couple of years Smith translated the tablets and with the help of his wife and a couple of friends they transcribed the translation. Once it was finished the angel Moroni proof read it and took the golden tablets back. The tablets were never seen again. In 1830 Smith published *The Book of Mormon*. Later that year Smith and his followers started the “Church of Christ” and established several branches throughout New York. He emphasized that his church was the restored and true church of Jesus Christ and distinct from all the other false denominations of Christianity. He and his church immediately faced opposition from many people who lived in New York and knew him as a con-artist. In response to their opposition he fled and while in hiding claimed that the apostles Peter, John, and James had come to him in a vision and made him a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

In 1831 Smith moved to Kirkland, Ohio, took over a charismatic church there, and grew his followers to over two thousand people. Smith constructed his first Mormon temple in Kirkland, Ohio. Smith required communal living where his followers signed their estates over to him. Smith also established a Mormon community in Far West, Missouri. Eventually he faced opposition in Kirkland when the non-Mormon residents opposed his political power and corruption. One day a mob caught him and one of his men, beat them, and tarred and feathered them.

Smith changed the name of his church to the “Church of Latter-day Saints” and formed his own military. Non-Mormon residents continuously accused Smith of fraud and sexual misconduct with girls. In 1838 Smith and his followers moved to Far West, Missouri. At that time his church also took the name “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” During this time Smith’s followers and militia continued to grow. However, there was also conflict internally in the church and Smith excommunicated people who questioned his authority. There was also persecution from the non-Mormon residents of Missouri. In August of 1838 the non-Mormons refused to let Mormons vote in the election. This led to the 1838 Mormon War where Mormons

and non-Mormons attacked each other and burned each other's towns and farms. Eventually Smith and his militia were defeated by the Missouri state militia, and Smith was arrested and tried for treason. The Mormons were then kicked out of the state of Missouri.

In 1839 Smith and his followers moved to Illinois where he purchased a plot of land along the Mississippi River. During this time Smith sent Brigham Young with a group of Mormons to do missions in Europe, where they converted many people to Mormonism. Smith gained a charter from the Illinois government to build his own city, which he named Nauvoo (Hebrew for "to be beautiful"). The charter also allowed him to form his own local government and raise a militia in order to defend his people.

In 1841, Smith publicly revealed his doctrine of plural marriages (polygamy), baptism of the dead, and began the construction of his second temple. The initiation rites of the temple resembled the structure of Freemasonry, into which Smith had previously been initiated. In the next couple of years, the people of Illinois began to oppose the Mormons because of fraud and corruption. At the same time dissenters among the Mormons began to question Smith's authority. He excommunicated them, which only created other dissenters. The dissenters publicly revealed Smith's beliefs in many gods and claimed that Smith was using his doctrine of polygamy and religion as a pretext to lure unassuming women to Nauvoo in order to seduce and marry them. By the time Smith died he had forty-four wives, including women already married and underage girls.

In 1844, fearing another mob attack, Smith ordered his militia to destroy the local newspaper. Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois mobilized the state militia and demanded that Smith surrender. Smith and his brother Hyrum were arrested and put on trial for inciting a riot and treason. Later, an angry mob rushed the county jail and shot and killed both Smith and Hyrum. After his death, the non-Mormon newspapers were unanimous in portraying Smith as a religious fanatic. But in Mormonism Smith is remembered as a prophet who was martyred for his faith. Joseph Smith had claimed to be a direct descendant of Jesus Christ and the greatest prophet who ever lived.

"I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet." (Joseph Smith. *History of the Church*. Vol. 6, pp. 408-412.)

"If any man preach any other Gospel than that which I have preached, he shall be cursed." (Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 366.)

"And I prophesy in the name of the Lord God of Israel, unless the United States redress the wrongs committed upon the Saints in Missouri and punish the crimes committed by her officers that in a few years the government will be utterly overthrown and wasted and there will not be so much as a potsherd left..." (Joseph Smith. *Documentary History of the Church*. Vol. 5, p. 394.)



Brigham Young (1801–1877) converted to Mormonism in 1832. He became the next president and prophet in 1847 after Joseph Smith’s death. As a result of increasing conflict between Mormons and non-Mormons in Illinois, Young led his followers to Salt Lake Valley, Utah. Over the next few years over 60,000 Mormons migrated to Utah. There Young established the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the University of Deseret (now called the University of Utah).

In 1853, Young broke ground and laid the cornerstone for the Salt Lake Valley temple. It took forty years to complete. When it was finished in 1893, Wilford Woodruff (the fourth president) dedicated the temple. The temple is 253,015 square feet and 222 feet tall, with a 12.5-foot statue of the angel Moroni that tops the capstone.

Young declared himself the governor of Utah and made official the practice of plural marriages (polygamy), to which the American government responded with anti-polygamy laws. In 1857 The Utah Mormon War between Mormons and non-Mormons ensued. The United States army invaded Utah and Young agreed to step down and be replaced by a non-Mormon governor. However, in reality the Mormons still maintained their power and control over Utah.

As the Mormons built roads and towns during this time, Young issued an extermination order against the Timpanogos Indians, which led to many wars. Eventually he made peace with the Native Americans. Young also supported slavery and helped catch runaway slaves. When Young died, he had fifty-five wives, including women already married and underaged girls.

“If you do not know whose right it is to give revelations, I will tell you. It is I.” (Brigham Young. *Times and Seasons*. October 15th, 1844, p. 683.)

“I have never preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call scripture.” (Brigham Young. *Journal of Discourses*, p. 95.)

“Who can tell us of the inhabitants of this little planet that shines of an evening, called the Moon?... So it is with regard to the inhabitants of the Sun. Do you not think it is inhabited? I rather think it is. Do you think there is any life there? No question of it; it was not made in vain.” (Brigham Young. *Journal of Discourses*. Vol. 1, p. 219.)

After Young’s death the Mormon presidents continued to resist the United States government’s anti-polygamy laws and preached that it was God’s law and necessary for salvation. In 1890, congress disincorporated the LDS Church and seized most of its assets. Soon thereafter, Wilford Woodruff (the fourth president) issued a manifesto that officially suspended the practice of plural marriages and excommunicated those who married more than one woman after the decree. Those who already had multiple wives were allowed to maintain their marriages for the sake of the children. However, many Mormons continued to practice plural marriages in Utah, arguing that God had revealed the doctrine of plural marriages to Joseph Smith and that Woodruff went against God in order to be accepted by the American culture. In 1920, Lorin C. Woolley claimed a separate line of priesthood from the LDS church and created the Fundamentalist Mormon Church based on plural marriages and communal living. Today there are about 20,000 Fundamentalist Mormons in America. Officially the present-day LDS Church excommunicates all members who practice plural marriages.

With Woodruff’s decree against plural marriages, Mormon relationship with the government began to improve throughout the remainder of the 1890s. As the Mormons remained largely isolated in Utah from the rest of America, they continued to send missionaries out from Utah and

their numbers grew rapidly. By 1900 Utah's population was 250,000, the vast majority were Mormons. By 1950 there were more than one million Mormons.

By the late 1960s, Mormon missionaries were now in many different countries including Asia and Africa. With the civil rights movement in America, they were faced with public controversy over their doctrine concerning dark skinned people. As taught by Joseph Smith, Mormons believe that dark skinned people were cursed to have the "skin of blackness" because they were the descendants of Cain. Dark skinned people were allowed to be Mormons and be baptized but they were not allowed into the temple or to become priests. In 1978, due to the controversy, the Mormon president declared that God had reversed this policy and dark-skinned people were now allowed into the temple and to become priests. Today there are many black members of the LDS church and many predominantly black congregations.

"Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a sin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the Holy Priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the Holy Priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to." (Brigham Young. *Journal of Discourses*. Vol. 11, p. 272.)

Throughout history the Mormon presidents and church have emphasized their distinctiveness from other Christian denominations, but today the LDS church, in a desire to be accepted, emphasizes their similarities with Christianity and that they are just another denomination. They emphasize the importance of the nuclear family, Christian ethics, and community involvement. They strive to be good people and citizens and most people in America see them this way.

In 2000, the Mormon church reported 60,784 missionaries. Worldwide church membership stood at just over 11 million and reached 14 million by 2010, with 6 million in the United States. It is the largest non-orthodox Christian group in the world. Mormons state that they convert more than 310,000 people every year, 80% of whom are from Protestant backgrounds.

Writings

The most authoritative sources of theology are four religious texts, called the "standard works."

The Book of Mormon was written by the prophet Mormon on golden tablets in 421 AD. It tells of two different groups of Israelites who migrated from Israel to the Americas and tells of the coming of Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith found, translated, and published *The Book of Mormon* in 1830. It is considered "another Testament of Jesus Christ" in addition to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. The Mormon church has made approximately 4,000 changes to *The Book of Mormon* since its first printing in 1830. These include spelling, grammar, and theological changes.

"I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." (Joseph Smith. *History of the Church*. Vol. 4, p. 461.)

Doctrine and Covenants was published by Joseph Smith in 1835 and contains many of his revelations from God. The book originally contained two parts. The first is a collection of Smith's lectures pronouncing church doctrine. The second is collection of Smith's revelations

from God. The doctrine portion of the book has been removed by the modern-day LDS church and additional revelations from other Mormon prophets has been added.

Pearl of Great Price was compiled and published by Franklin D. Richards in Liverpool, England in 1851. It is a collection of five other books. The first is the *Book of Moses*, written by Smith, and contains a prologue to the creation account of Genesis from Moses, Smith's translation of the first six chapters of Genesis, and a vision of Enoch. The Second is the *Book of Abraham*, which contains writings of Abraham that Smith found written on an Egyptian papyrus and translated. The third is Smith's translation of the *Gospel of Mathew*. The fourth is Smith's autobiography. The fifth are articles of faith written by Smith.

The Holy Bible is considered one of their books, but only as it has been translated correctly by Smith. The Mormons use a Bible that is part King James and Smith's translation of the Bible.

“We believe the Bible to be the word of God in so far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” (*The Articles of Faith*, No. 8.)

The Mormon church has other authoritative teachings of the Mormon prophets that are considered inspired by God. One of these is the monthly periodical *Ensign*, which contains faith-promoting and evangelizing information, stories, sermons, and writings of church leaders that are all inspired by God.

Most Mormons do not have a problem with the many contradictions in their authoritative writings and the changes to church edicts because of the doctrine of the **Law of Eternal Progression**, which states that newer revelation replaces earlier revelation through the leading of the spirit of God.

Beliefs about God

There are trillions of gods who rule over many different planets in the universe. All these gods used to be humans on different planets who evolved into godhood and created their own planet to rule over and to populate with humans.

The biblical god **Elohim** grew up as a mortal man on another planet somewhere in the universe and through obedience to the doctrines of Mormonism (not called that on his planet) completed the process of becoming a perfect and exalted being. He then ascended into the spirit realm and now lives in a heavenly existence near the star Kolob. He is a spiritual being that has flesh and bones just like us.

“I am going to tell you how God became God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take away the veil so that you may see... and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ did.” (Joseph Smith. *King Follett Discourse*, pp. 8-10.)

Elohim is married to the Heavenly Mother (who also has flesh and bones), with whom he has had billions of spirit children (born without physical bodies). Smith and the Fundamentalist Mormons believed that Elohim also had many hundreds of other wives in addition to the Heavenly Mother. The LDS church does not teach this today.

Mormons deny the existence of the trinity. Jesus and the Holy Ghost are the spirit children of Elohim and the Heavenly Mother. Jesus is the Jehovah (Yahweh) of the Bible and received his

physical body and became known as Jesus when he was born to the virgin Mary. The Holy Ghost has only a spirit body.

Though there are many gods in the universe they are not to be worshiped. Neither is the Heavenly Mother to be worshiped even though this does not denigrate the honor she deserves. The only beings that are to be worshiped are Elohim and Jesus.

Beliefs about the Material Realm

Matter is eternal with no origin. Elohim gathered together pre-existent matter and created the planet Earth near the star Kolob over a period of 6,000 years, and then migrated its orbit to its present position in our solar system.

“Now, the word create came from the word *baurau*, which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time He had... They had no beginning and can have no end.” (Joseph Smith. *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, pp. 302-317.)

Beliefs about Humanity

All humans began as pre-existing “spirit intelligences” before Elohim and the Heavenly Mother gave them spirit bodies when they gave birth to them. The **spirit children** of Elohim and the Heavenly Mother includes Jehovah (Jesus), Lucifer (Satan), all humans on earth, and all the demons. Thus, they are all brothers and sisters.

Before Adam and Eve were placed on the earth Elohim and his council were deciding what the spirit children would have to do to gain bodies of flesh and bones, perfect themselves, and become gods like Elohim. Jehovah put forth the idea of giving them free will and allowing them to choose right from wrong. Eventually a savior would be sent to guide them into godhood. However, Lucifer put forth the idea of forcing everyone into obedience and redemption. When Lucifer’s plan was rejected, he rebelled and started a war in heaven. One third of the spirit children fought with him, one third fought against him with Jehovah as their leader, and one third remained neutral. Those who joined Lucifer were cast to earth, forever forbidden bodies of flesh and bones and became the demons. Those who fought against Lucifer were allowed to be birthed into bodies of flesh and bones on earth and become “white and delightsome.” Those who remained neutral would also be birthed into bodies of flesh and bones on Earth but would be cursed with the “skin of blackness.” They became the line of Cain in Genesis 4.

Brigham Young taught that Elohim and Heavenly Mother came to earth as Adam and Eve to rebirth these spirit children into bodies of flesh and bones. This view has been rejected by the modern LDS church. It is currently taught that Adam and Eve were “among our Father’s noblest [spirit] children” sent to earth to start the human race. Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which brought sin, sickness, and death into the world and made Adam and Eve’s bodies mortal. It was Elohim’s divine will for Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and then sin, for it blessed them with physical bodies, free will, and the opportunity to gain eternal life and become gods.

“The fall of man came as a blessing in disguise and was the means of furthering the purposes of the Lord in the progress of man, rather than a means of hindering them. I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin... It is not always a sin to transgress the law...” (Joseph Smith. *Doctrines of Salvation*. Vol. 1, pp. 114-115.)

“The devil told the truth, what is the mystery about it? He is doing it today. He is telling one or two truths and mixing them with a thousand errors to get the people to swallow them. I do not blame Mother Eve, I would not have had her miss eating the forbidden fruit for anything in the world.” (Brigham Young. *Deseret News*. p. 4.)

Adam and Eve then gave birth to Elohim and the Heavenly Mother’s spirit children, giving them bodies of flesh and bones. All persons on Earth are the spirit children of Elohim and the Heavenly Mother and are birthed into physical bodies on earth through their earthly parents.

Beliefs about Jesus

Jesus is Jehovah (Yahweh) of the Bible and is the first spirit child of Elohim the Father. Elohim came to earth and had sexual relations with Mary in order to produce the physical body of Jesus. When Jesus became an adult, he married Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene and had many children.

“The birth of the Savior was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of a natural action. He partook of flesh and blood, was begotten of his Father, as we were of our father.” (Brigham Young. *Journal of Discourses*. Vol. 8, p. 115.)

Jesus then died on the cross in order to aid humanity in their salvation. Jesus’ blood atonement was essential to salvation for paying for the sins of Adam and helping people gain salvation, but it was not sufficient to atone for all the sins that people commit as a result of their own choices. After his death, Jesus visited the Native Americas and preached the gospel and established the New Jerusalem there. He then ascended into the heaven to be with Elohim the Father.

Beliefs about the Problem with Humanity and the World

The problem with humanity is that the spirit children are without bodies of flesh and bones, which is necessary to become gods. Once they are birthed on earth as humans, they need to overcome sin and achieve perfection so that they can become gods. Everyone needs to sin at least once so that they can overcome it and prove their worthiness as gods. However, people are not born with original sin (the sin of Adam), they are sinners only as a result of their own unrighteous choices.

“We believe that men shall be punished for their own sins and not for Adam’s transgression.” (*The Articles of Faith*. No. 2.)

Beliefs about the Solution to the Problem

All people are capable of perfecting themselves through obedience and becoming gods just like their heavenly father before them.

“God has abundantly confirmed that man is the supreme creation... that man is the offspring of God; that for man, and man alone, was the earth created... and that, having within him the

seeds of godhood and thus being a god in embryo, man has unlimited potential for progress and attainment.” (Spencer W. Kimball. *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 4.)

“The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming Gods like himself...We are created to become Gods like unto our Father in heaven.” (Joseph Smith. *Journal of Discourses*. Vol. 3. p. 93.)

First people must be born into bodies of flesh and bones and then sin at least once. Then they must repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus and the gospel. Jesus’ blood atonement was essential to salvation for paying for the sins of Adam and helping people gain salvation, but it was not sufficient to atone for all the sins that people commit as a result of their own choices. It was his sweating of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before his death as well as his death on the cross that made atonement for sin. Jesus’ resurrection makes humanity’s resurrection possible.

Therefore, people are now capable of becoming gods because of Jesus but must become perfect on their own through obedience to the ordinances of LDS church. This includes a required ten percent tithe to the LDS church that they are held accountable to by an annual interview with their local bishop.

“We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” (*The Articles of Faith*, No. 3.)

“The Father has promised us that through our faithfulness we shall be blessed with the fullness of his kingdom. In other words, we will have the privilege of becoming like him. To become like him we must have all the powers of godhood; thus a man and his wife when glorified will have spirit children who eventually will go on an earth like this one we are on and pass through the same kind of experiences, being subject to mortal conditions, and if faithful, then they also will receive the fullness of exaltation and partake of the same blessings.”

“Salvation is attainable only through compliance with the laws and ordinances of the Gospel; and all who are thus saved become sons and daughters unto God in a distinctive sense.” (James Talmage. *Articles of Faith*. p. 422.)

Once they have put their faith in Jesus Christ, they must be baptized by a Mormon with the proper priestly authority. Any Mormon can attend the meetinghouses (homes or churches), where they have weekly gatherings of teaching and worship. But only those who have proven themselves worthy through a temple recommend can enter the temples. There are about 160 temples worldwide that are used for worship and performing special rites.

Once one has been baptized for one year, he may seek a **temple recommend**. Persons seeking a temple recommend are interviewed by their bishop and stake president (a person who oversees many congregations in a region) who will determine their worthiness. They are asked about their statement of faith, obedience to the ordinances to the LDS church, confession of sins to church leaders, and their tithing. If they are found worthy, they will receive a two-year temple recommend.

“With an Eye single to his glory, prepare yourself for temple blessings.” (*Doctrine and Covenants*. 88:67-68)

“In the Lord’s House you leave the world behind and start on the path to eternal glory.”
(*Doctrine and Covenants*, 110:7-9)

In the temple they will receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands from the proper priestly authority. Through their works and obedience, they will maintain their worthiness to be in the temple and achieve perfection. When they die, they will become gods and be given their own heavenly throne. There they will create their own planet and give birth to spirit children in order to populate that planet. And the cycle will continue for all eternity.

“Here then is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you.” (Joseph Smith. *King Follett Discourse*. pp. 8-10.)

“As Man is, God once was; as God is, man may become.” (Lorenzo Snow. *Journal History of Church*. p. 4.)

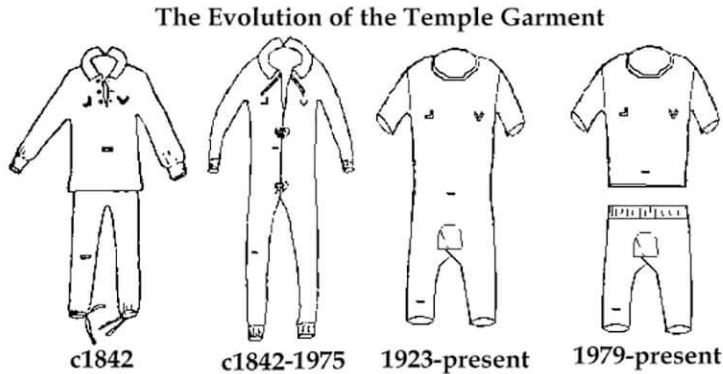
“There is no end to this development; it will go on forever. We will become gods and have jurisdiction over worlds, and these worlds will be peopled by our own offspring. We will have an endless eternity for this.” (Joseph Smith. *Doctrines of Salvation*. Vol. 2, p. 48.)

In order to seal your spouse to you for all eternity in the heavenly realm one must have a **celestial marriage** within the Mormon temple. Even if one is already married civilly, one must be sealed to his or her spouse in the temple. If the wife dies the man may remarry and seal the second wife to him. Both these wives, and any others, will be his wives for all eternity in his heavenly realm. After death Elohim raises the man from the grave and the man raises his wife from the grave. They may also seal their children to themselves.

“Your dreams can become reality if you make it your goal. To marry the right person, at the right time, in the right place, and by the right authority.” (Thompson S. Monson. *New Era*, Oct. 2004, p. 6.)

“Motherhood lies at the foundation of happiness in the home... God has laid upon men and women very sacred obligations with respect to motherhood... In I Timothy 2:13-15, we are told that ‘Adam was first formed, then Eve... Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.’ Can she be saved without child-bearing? She indeed takes an awful risk if she willfully disregards what is a pronounced requirement of God...” (Joseph Smith. *Gospel Doctrine*. p. 288.)

After one has taken part in the endowment ceremony to enter the temple, they are required to wear their temple garments (Mormon underwear) all the time, day and night. The temple garments are viewed as a symbolic reminder of the covenants they made in the temple and are a source of protection from evil spirits. The earliest garments had the square and compass of Freemasonry stitched into them as protection.



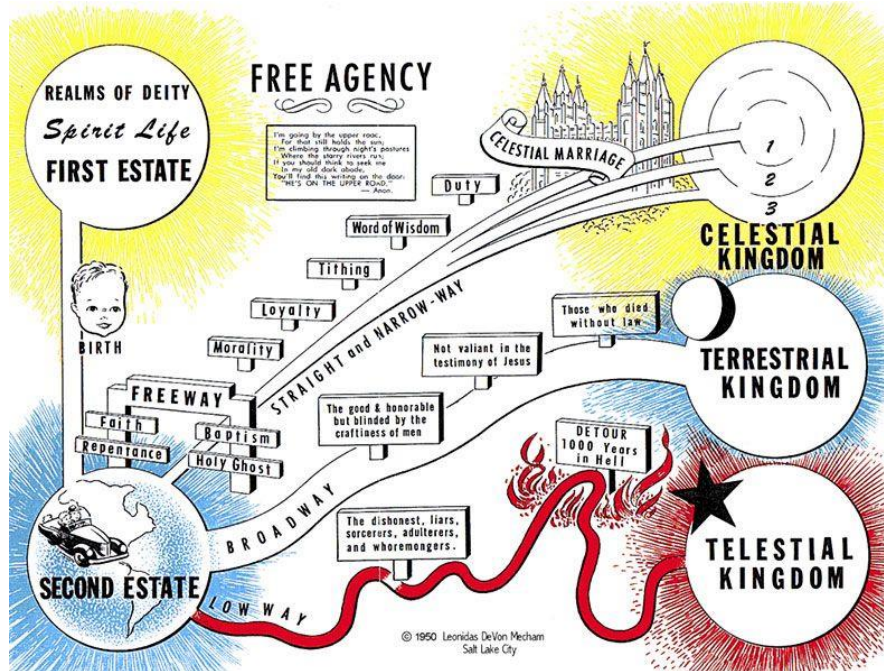
Mormons believe that the afterlife is divided into three kingdoms, the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms.

Celestial kingdom is where Elohim the Father dwells. Only those who have accepted the teachings of Jesus Christ and become righteous through all of the required ordinances and covenants of the LDS church are resurrected into physical bodies and enter the presence of the Father. This kingdom is divided into three levels. The first is only for those who were sealed in celestial marriage. They are given the right to create their own planet and populate it. The second two are not described except that the people there will become ministering angels.

Terrestrial kingdom is for those who lived good moral lives but “were blinded by the craftiness of men.” They were good people but did not accept the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by the LDS church (this would include Christians). They will be resurrected into physical bodies and enter into the presence of Jehovah Jesus but not the presence of Elohim the Father.

Telestial kingdom is where all those who did not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ and were “liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.” First, they must go to spirit prison (hell) for 1,000 years of suffering for their sins. Afterwards they will be resurrected into physical bodies into the telestial kingdom.

Mormonism teaches that it is possible for people to kingdom hop into higher kingdoms based on their acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ and works in the afterlife. What is required, how many people do it, and how high you can go is not discussed.



After receiving a temple recommend a person may perform the rite of **baptism for the dead** in the temple. The Mormon may take the name of person of the same sex who did not make it into the kingdom of God and be baptized on their behalf as a proxy in order to transfer the dead person into the kingdom of God, most likely from the telestial kingdom to the terrestrial kingdom.

Brigham Young taught the doctrine of **blood atonement**, which taught that there are certain sins that are so heinous that not even the blood of Jesus Christ will atone for them. In order atone for these sins, the person must be violently killed so that by “having their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins” (Brigham Young. *Journal Discourses*, p. 221). This practice was allowed by the Mormon church until Spencer W. Kimball (twelfth president) overturned it in 1978.

“You say, ‘That man ought to die for transgressing the law of God.’ Let me suppose a case. Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands.” (Brigham Young. *Journal of Discourses*. Vol. 3, p. 247.)

Witnessing

Witnessing often seems scary, but try to remember you are just sharing who Jesus is to you in your life. It is important to remember that it is not your job to answer all their questions and convert them. It is your job to share who God and Jesus Christ are as you know them now at this point in your life and how they have been involved in your life.

Witnessing to Other People in General

First, pray for wisdom, pray for them, and pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit. Even if you just met them, you can still ask for God's leading in a brief prayer.

Don't be afraid of them or make it awkward. Remember that they are people with many of the same fears and desires that you have. They may look culturally different and sound different as they express their worldview, but at the core of their being, they are a person who wants to be loved, feel safe, and have meaning in their life. They have come to believe that the worldview they have will fulfill those needs. That is really the only thing that makes them different from you.

Second, the most important part is to love them and listen to them. Many non-Christians complain that Christians immediately share the gospel without really getting to know them. Most people do not feel like people really listen to them and get to know who they are. It is important to realize that most witnessing is the result of building a relationship with people and being involved in their life. Take the time to really listen to their desires and fear and draw them out with questions. Sometimes you will find that their beliefs are based more on childhood experiences or being hurt by other Christians than the evidence or benefits of their religion. Understand that you may be in for the long haul, and it may take many conversations and years to lead them to Christ. You may not even see them become a Christian, but God will use you as well as many others to lead them to Christ, which may happen at the influence of another Christian long after they are out of your life.

Even if you know a lot about their religion or have met a lot of people from their religion, do not assume you know what they believe. Not everyone of the same religion necessarily has the same beliefs. Ask them what they believe and why they believe what they do. Pay attention to what they emphasize or what they spend the most time talking about because that usually is the most important thing to them. That will be the most rooted belief that will be the hardest for them to shift their perspective on. Remember not everything they believe is wrong or bad. Compare it to the basic affirmations of the Christian faith, not your personal belief preferences.

Third, it is better to start with asking them questions about what they think about Christianity than telling them what it is and why it is right. You may find that many things they believe are correct. Ask them who they think God and Jesus are. What do they think is wrong with the world and how it should be fixed? Do they think they are a good person, and why? What do they think will happen to them when they die? If you can affirm them in that belief or talk about how you believe that too, then you are starting on common ground with them, which will make you less hostile and help them feel more connected to you and more comfortable to share with you. Then you can lovingly point out the differences between what they believe and what the Bible says. Frame it as Jesus being so much more rather than "this is right" or what you have to believe.

Fourth, get them to think about how their worldview corresponds to reality. Ask them in a curious and loving way, not in a debating way, about the contradictions in their belief systems. Listen for internal contradictions as they explain their beliefs. You must listen to what they are saying and ask questions. Sooner or later you catch on to inconsistencies. Inconsistencies usually arise when discussing the relationship between their beliefs and reality. In a loving way confront them on these inconsistencies in order to show them that their beliefs do not correspond with reality. You are trying to help them step outside their belief system and see it from a different perspective. Ask them to explain how they can embrace these contradictions. Ask them the

questions that you have always had about their religion or the things that do not make sense to you.

Do not get distracted by the bizarre or fringe beliefs that other people have. Focus on the majors: who God is, humanity, the problem with humanity and creation, and most importantly the solution to the problem with humanity and creation. The focus should always be on who Jesus is and His work on the cross. Share with them how Jesus provides a better relationship, path, and future.

Finally, share your story with them. They may be able to argue with beliefs, but they cannot argue against your own story. Tell them about your life before Christ, how you came to know Christ, and how He changed your life. And most importantly, tell them how Christ got you through and is getting you through your struggles. Remember, people of other religions do not have a personal relationship with a being that is all powerful and can get them through anything. They are all on their own in dealing with their struggles. Your personal stories are the most powerful tool you have in witnessing to others, for this is where Jesus becomes real in the everyday lives of everyday people.

Witnessing to Mormons

Mormons see themselves as Christians, so many questions that you would ask to see if someone is a Christian, they will answer in the affirmative. Questions like: Are you a Christian? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Is Jesus the Son of God? Is Jesus born of a virgin? Is Jesus your Savior? Is He your Lord? Do you believe in heaven? Do you believe in hell? Do you believe in salvation by grace? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? It is important to make sure they define what they mean by these statements.

If Mormons do come to your door witnessing then pray for your time with them, invite them into your home, and love them. Mormon missionaries often say that Christians are the most unloving people that they witness to, usually calling them a cult. Do not call them a cult, do not judge them. They are good people who are trying to live a good life. They are not people trying to deceive or hurt you. They are the victims of a works-oriented religion.

Ask them how their day is going, how long they have been a Mormon, etc. Show them that you are interested in them as a person. They will then want to share their gospel with you.

Understand that they have a memorized script that they will recite to you. Let them. They will end their “presentation” with something like if this sounds or feels good to you then it is the Holy Ghost validating what we have said.

Once they are done, politely ask them questions that you have about their religion. The *Witnessing to Mormons* article (www.knowingthebible.net/classes/comparative-religions/mormonism) can help you ask questions. The goal is to get them to think about the contradictions in their beliefs, the lack of evidence for the Mormon religion, and how works oriented Mormonism is compared to true Christianity. They know many of the questions that Christians will ask and have pre-memorized answers to them. But it is your off-script dialogue with them that will get them to think about your questions beyond an academic memorization of questions and answers. You have to trust that the Holy Spirit will use your interaction with them to open their hearts and minds to the true Jesus Christ. They may say that they want to come back with someone else (usually an elder) to help answer the questions. That is alright, for it gives you time to prepare. There are many articles at www.carm.org/mormonism that can help

you get prepared. Be prepared for them to have questions for you. If you do not know the answers, that is alright, tell them you will research the answers and get back to them.

Invite them back and pray and prepare for the next visit. Eventually after a few visits they will either meet with you privately to talk more or they will stop coming because you showed no interest in converting. If you never hear from them again that is alright, you shared your faith with them. You have no idea how the Holy Spirit is going to use that in their lives as they move on in life and meet more Christians.

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