

THE MORMON PUZZLE

Comparison Chart— Mormonism and Christianity

Introduction:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon church) professes to be a Christian church. However, a careful comparison of basic doctrinal positions of that church to those of historical, biblical Christianity reveal many radical differences. This pamphlet compares Mormon doctrines as stated in LDS authoritative primary sources to those of historic Christianity as derived solely from the Bible.

The Doctrine of God:

Historic Christianity

The one God is a Spirit who is the personal, eternal, infinite Creator of all that exists. He is the *only* God and necessary for all other things to exist. He exists eternally as a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (see Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10; 44:6-8; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; 17:3)

Mormonism

God (Heavenly Father) is an exalted man with a physical body of flesh and bone. LDS founder Joseph Smith said, "If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345). The trinity is denied with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost seen as three separate entities. "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us" (*Doctrine and Covenants* [D&C] 130:22).

The Doctrine of Jesus Christ:

Historic Christianity	Mormonism
<p>Jesus Christ was the virgin-born God incarnate who existed in all time with the Father and Holy Spirit in the eternal Trinity. As a man He possessed two natures—human and divine. He lived a sinless life and willingly died on the cross as a sacrifice for the sin of all humanity. (see John 1:1-18; 8:56-59; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:13-22; Heb.1:3; 13:8)</p>	<p>Jesus was the spiritual “first born” Son of God in the preexistence. “Every person who was ever born on earth was our spirit brother or sister in heaven. The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ, so he is literally our elder brother” (<i>Gospel Principles</i> [GP], p. 11). “And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn” (D&C 93:21). He is also the “only begotten” physical offspring of God by procreation on earth. “Jesus is the only person on earth to be born of a mortal mother and an immortal father. That is why he is called the Only Begotten Son” (GP, p. 64). His atonement (death and resurrection) provides <i>immortality</i> for all people regardless of their faith. “Christ thus overcame physical death. Because of his atonement, everyone born on this earth will be resurrected . . . This condition is called immortality. All people who ever lived will be resurrected, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous” (<i>The Book of Mormon</i> [BOM], Alma 11:44)” (GP, p. 74). (See GP, pp. 11, 17-19, 61-77.)</p>

The Doctrine of Scriptures and Authority:

Historic Christianity	Mormonism
<p>The Bible (Old and New Testaments) is the unique, revealed, and inspired Word of God. It is the sole authority for faith and practice for Christians. (see 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21)</p>	<p>Recognizes the LDS Four Standard Works as authoritative. These include the Bible “as far as it is translated correctly” (Articles of Faith 1:8). It also includes <i>The Book of Mormon</i> (BOM) which Joseph Smith declared is “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” (<i>Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith</i>, p. 194).</p> <p>The church also regards <i>The Doctrine and Covenants</i> (D&C) as Scripture. It “is a collection of modern revelations . . . regarding The Church of Jesus Christ as it has been restored in these last days” (GP, p. 54).</p> <p><i>The Pearl of the Great Price</i> (PGP) is the fourth book believed to be inspired. “It clarifies doctrines and teachings that were lost from the Bible and gives added information concerning the creation of the earth” (GP, p. 54).</p> <p>The church’s president is regarded as “a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet” (D&C 107:91-92).</p>

The Doctrine of Humanity:

Historic Christianity	Mormonism
<p>Human beings are created in God's image, meaning they have personal qualities similar to God's. Every person is a unique, precious being of dignity and worth. (see Gen. 1:26-27)</p>	<p>People are the preexisted spiritual offspring of the Heavenly Father and Mother. "All men and women are . . . literally the sons and daughters of Deity . . . Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal (physical) body" (Joseph F. Smith, "The Origin of Man," <i>Improvement Era</i>, Nov. 1909, pp. 78,80, as quoted in GP, p. 11). They are born basically good and are "gods in embryo." A commonly quoted Mormon aphorism (attributed to fifth LDS president Lorenzo Snow) says "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."</p>

The Doctrine of Sin:

Historic Christianity	Mormonism
<p>Human beings have chosen to sin against God, rejecting His nature and pursuing life opposed to His essential character and revealed law. (see Rom. 3:23; 7:14-25; 1 John 1:8-10)</p>	<p>People sin by disobedience to God's laws. Adam's fall, a part of Heavenly Father's plan, caused a loss of immortality, which was necessary for mankind to advance, (see GP, pp. 31-34). As Eve declared according to LDS scripture, "Were it not for our transgression we never should have . . . known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (PGP, Moses 5:11; see also BOM, 2 Nephi 2:22-25). Each person is responsible for his or her own sin.</p>

The Doctrine of Salvation:

Historic Christianity	Mormonism
<p>Salvation is release from the guilt and power of sin through God's gift of grace. It is provided through Christ's atonement and received by personal faith in Christ as Savior and Lord. (see Rom. 3:20; 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-10)</p>	<p>Jesus' atonement provided immortality for all people. Exaltation (godhood) is available only to Mormons through obedience to LDS teachings: faith, baptism, endowments, celestial marriage, and tithing. "Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—Wherefore, all things are theirs" (D&C, 76:58-59).</p> <p>These are some of the blessings given to exalted people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They will live eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see D&C, 76). 2. They will become gods. 3. They will have their righteous family members with them and will be able to have spirit children also. These spirit children will have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father. They will be an eternal family. 4. They will receive a fullness of joy. 5. They will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have—all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge (See GP, p. 302). <p>Baptism for the dead provides post-mortem salvation for non-Mormons, and is "by immersion performed by a living person for one who is dead. This ordinance is performed in temples" (GP, p. 375). (See also GP, chapters 18-23.)</p>

The Doctrine of Life after Death:

Historic Christianity	Mormonism
<p>Eternal life in heaven with God for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ. Eternal separation from God's presence in hell for the unsaved. (see Matt. 5:12-30; 25:41; Rev. 20-22)</p>	<p>One of three levels of glory:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom for faithful Mormons where people may become gods or angels; "Then shall they be gods" (D&C 132:20). 2. Terrestrial Kingdom for righteous non-Mormons; "These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men. These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fullness" (D&C 76:75-76). 3. Telestial Kingdom for wicked and ungodly (not hell); "These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers . . . who suffer the wrath of God on earth" (D&C 76:103-104). (See also D&C 76:57-119; 131:1-4.)

The Doctrine of the Church:

Historic Christianity	Mormonism
<p>Christians congregate together in local bodies and along denominational lines sharing distinctive doctrinal and ecclesiastical concepts. There is no organization or denomination that can claim exclusive designation as the "one true church." The universal church consists of all the redeemed in Jesus Christ in all of the ages. (see Matt. 16:15-19; 1 Cor. 1:12-14; Eph. 2:19; 3:11-12)</p>	<p>Asserts that the LDS is the one true church on the face of the earth. Joseph Smith claimed Jesus Christ told him to join none of the existing denominations because "they were all wrong . . . that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt" (PGP: Joseph Smith—History 1:19-20). Mormons claim only the LDS possesses the divine authority of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood as restored by God to Joseph Smith in 1829. (D&C 13; 27:8-13; 107:1-20; PGP: Joseph Smith—History 1:68-73)</p>

References:

<p>_____. <i>Gospel Principles</i>. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992.</p> <p>McConkie, Bruce. <i>A New Witness for the Articles of Faith</i>. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1986.</p> <p>Smith, Joseph, Jr. <i>The Book of Mormon - Another Testament of Jesus Christ</i>. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982.</p> <p>Smith, Joseph, Jr. <i>The Doctrine and Covenants</i>. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982.</p>	<p>Smith, Joseph, Jr. <i>History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</i>. 7 vols. 2nd ed. rev. Edited by B.H. Roberts. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951.</p> <p>Smith, Joseph, Jr. <i>The Pearl of Great Price</i>. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982.</p> <p>Smith, Joseph Fielding. <i>Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith</i>. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977.</p>
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