

Busy Christian's Guide to Mormonism

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A. Basic Facts about Mormonism

Founder	Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844)
Official Name	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (based in Salt Lake City, UT)
Other Names	Mormons (nickname, generally accepted); LDS
Scriptures	<p><i>The Book of Mormon</i> – supposedly an account of Israelite people in America written on plates shown to Smith by an angel. The BOM is a 19th century work, plagiarized from other sources including the Bible (one-tenth of its chapters are reproduced from the Bible). No evidence exists for the BOM before 1827; its New World geography and history have no support outside LDS scholarship.</p> <p><i>Pearl of Great Price</i> – contains Smith's First Vision account, among other things. Smith's 1832 account of the F.V. says he was convinced of the apostasy before he prayed, was seeking forgiveness, and saw Jesus. The 1838 PGP account reports that Smith prayed to know which church to join (and was told to join none) and that he saw the Father and the Son. These accounts are contradictory. PGP also contains the "Book of Abraham," supposedly translated from Abraham's own writings, but the papyrus that he claimed to translate was a pagan Egyptian funeral text written almost 2,000 years after Abraham.</p> <p><i>Doctrine and Covenants</i> – revelations, mostly to Smith, for the LDS church. Its doctrinal core, <i>Lectures on Faith</i> (1835), was removed in 1921. It contains false prophecies, e.g., it predicts a war between the States (which did happen) that would become a world war (which it did not). D&C also contains a "revelation" ending polygamy contrary to earlier "revelations" making it an eternal practice.</p>
Key Events	1820: Smith's "first vision" in which he was told not to join any church 1827: An angel supposedly leads Smith to the Book of Mormon plates 1830: Smith publishes the Book of Mormon, founds the Church 1844: Smith jailed, shot in gun battle in Nauvoo, Illinois 1847: Brigham Young, 2d LDS President, settles Mormons in Utah 1890: LDS church officially abandons polygamy so Utah can become a state 1978: LDS priesthood opened up to people of color
Membership	Over 6 million in USA; almost 16 million worldwide (as of 2017)
Sects	Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), now called the Community of Christ Thousands of polygamous "fundamentalist Mormons" in Utah and Idaho

B. For Further Information

Reading	Bowman, Robert M. Jr. <i>What Mormons Believe</i> . IVP, 2012. McKeever, Bill, and Eric Johnson. <i>Mormonism 101</i> . Baker, 2015.
Ministry	Institute for Religious Research: irr.org (Rob Bowman, Joel Groat) Mormonism Research Ministry: www.mrm.org (Bill McKeever, Eric Johnson) Utah Lighthouse Ministry: www.utlm.org/ (Sandra Tanner)

C. False Teachings of Mormonism

	Mormonism	Biblical Christianity
Scripture	The Bible is the word of God, but only Joseph Smith's translation is reliable; other Scriptures must be recognized (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price); the canon is not closed.	Smith's translation was based on his own theology, not inspiration. Other alleged scriptures contradict the Bible and thus cannot be accepted (Matt. 5:17-18; 22:29). Modern revelations are unneeded and suspect (cf. Jude 3).
Authority and the Church	The church became apostate when it lost apostles and prophets; these were restored through Smith, along with the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, without which no one may preach or baptize.	Only <i>some</i> were to apostatize (1 Tim. 4:1), not the church itself (Matt. 28:20; Jude 3). Apostles and prophets were foundational offices (Eph. 2:20; 3:5). Aaronic priesthood has been done away (Heb. 8-10); only Christ is a priest like Melchizedek (Heb. 5-7).
God	The Father, <i>Elohim</i> , is an exalted Man with a body of flesh and bones. He had billions of spirit children, including his firstborn <i>Jehovah</i> (Jesus), who became a God and helped created the world. The Father and the Son, along with the Holy Ghost, are one "Godhead," composed of three Gods who are one in purpose.	There is <i>one</i> God (Is. 43:10; 44:6-8; 1 Tim. 2:5), Jehovah (Deut. 6:4); he created the world by himself (Gen. 1:1; Is. 44:24). God is not a man, but is infinite spirit (Ps. 139:7-10; John 4:20-24). Corporeal language used of God is figurative (Is. 40:12; 66:1). The "Godhead" is not three Gods, but one Divine Being (Acts 17:24-29).
Humanity	Angels, human beings, and Christ were all spirit children of God in a preexistent realm; thus, all humans have the capacity to become Gods like the Father and Christ.	Both angels and humans were created, not procreated, by God (Ps. 148:2-6; Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7). Unlike Christ, we did not preexist (John 3:31; 8:56-58). We become God's children by adoption through faith in Christ (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26-4:7). We will never become Gods (Is. 43:10), though God's Spirit perfects our human nature (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; 2 Pet. 1:4).
Salvation and the Future	Christ's atonement redeems us from Adam's sin and our unwitting sins, providing universal salvation (resurrection) in one of three heavens for all but the sons of perdition. Particular salvation (exaltation) to Godhood is available only through obedience to LDS rules and participation in LDS rituals (notably baptisms for the dead, marriage in the temple).	Christ's death provided atonement for <i>all</i> of our sins (Rom. 5:6-10; 1 John 1:7), but only if we <i>believe</i> in him (John 3:16-17; Rom. 3:24-28; Eph. 2:8). There are <i>two</i> resurrections and two destinies, eternal life with God or eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46; John 5:28-29). Exaltation to Godhood is not possible for anyone, but all in Christ will be morally and physically like him (1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:1-2).