

What Is Mormonism?

Bible Answers About Denominations

Mormons themselves acknowledge that the Mormon Church stands or falls upon the story of Joseph Smith. Any understanding of Mormonism must begin with Joseph Smith. So important is he to Mormonism that he is often termed “the Prophet” in the works of LDS writers.

Joseph Smith, Jr., was born December 23, 1805 in Sharon, Vermont, to Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith. In his early life the family moved many times. Mr. Smith moved with his family about the year 1817 to an area near Palmyra, New York. When he was about fourteen, Smith claimed to have had a vision telling him that all churches were in error and that he should join none of them. He had a second vision in 1823 in which a messenger named Moroni appeared to him, telling him the location of a book which was written upon golden plates. He found the plates at a site known as the hill Cumorah, but he was not allowed to remove them at that time. Finally, he says, on September 22, 1827, he was given the plates by the heavenly messenger. He began to translate the plates and on March 26, 1830, with the financial help of a farmer named Martin Harris, he published the Book of Mormon.

In April of 1830 what is today called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was officially organized. Originally they called themselves the Church of Christ (Nephi 26:21, 4 Nephi 1:1, Doctrine and Covenants 20:1). In 1834 they changed the name to Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Some of Smith’s followers went to Kirtland, Ohio, where a temple was built. Later, Mormons moved onward to Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Smith received a revelation that Jackson County was the land of promise and the place for the city of Zion; however, he and his followers were not well received, and they moved to Far West, Missouri, and then to a community in Illinois which they called Nauvoo. It causes one to wonder where the vision originated. It was while living in Nauvoo that Smith was placed in jail in Carthage, Illinois, for ordering the destruction of the printing press of the anti-Mormon paper, The Nauvoo Expositor. He was released, but later re-arrested, together with his brother Hyrum, and was taken to the city jail in Carthage, Illinois, a few miles from Nauvoo. On June 27, 1844, a mob attacked the jail and killed both Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

After the death of Joseph Smith there was a division in the Mormon ranks over who would be the next president of the church. A few eventually formed the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This group believed that Joseph Smith’s young son, Joseph Smith III, was the rightful heir to the presidency of the church. The headquarters of this group is in Independence, Missouri.

The vast majority of Mormons followed Brigham Young. In 1846 Brigham Young led his followers west, where in 1847 they settled in what is now Salt Lake City, Utah. There are numerous divisions in Mormonism, but the two largest religious bodies that look to Joseph Smith, Jr. as a prophet are the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with its headquarters in Independence, Missouri.

The Mormon Church today emphatically claims to be Christian. To prove that, they often point to their official name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, even though they often refer to themselves as Mormons or members of the LDS Church. Bruce R. McConkie was not only a Mormon Apostle and son-in-law of Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth LDS President and Prophet, he is also one of their best theologians. He wrote, "This (LDS) Church is 'the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth' (Doc. & Cov. 1:30), the only organization authorized by the Almighty to preach his gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation, the only church which has power to save and exalt men in the hereafter" (Doc. & Cov. p. 136). If Mormonism is Christian, then why do they need three additional books of scripture (The Doctrine and Covenants; The Pearl of Great Price; the Book of Mormon)?

Joseph Smith, The False Prophet

Moses wrote, "But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die." "And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him." (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

Therefore, if Joseph Smith, Jr. gave even one prophecy that did not come to pass; then we know that Joseph Smith, Jr. was a false prophet, and he is not from God. There have been so many false prophets through the centuries trying to predict the final return of the Lord Jesus, and Joseph Smith, Jr. was one of them.

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