WORLD RELIGIONS

Mormonism – its History, Success, False Christ
Lesson #13

Mormonism is one of the most successful counterfeit religions to Christianity ever devised by Satan. There are some 13 million Mormons in the world. On the outside Mormonism looks wholesome, moral, pro-family, and Bible based. Closer examination reveals the shocking truth that Mormonism promotes a different Christ, a different gospel, a different source of revelation, and many other false and damning doctrines. The history of Mormonism is engaging, their corporate approach to religion is effective, their success in leading millions to hell is terrifying. In this lesson we will summarize Mormon history, success, and false views of Jesus Christ.

I. HISTORY OF MORMONISM

A. From *Religions A to Z:* "The story of Mormonism hinges on Joseph Smith, Jr. He was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont, and moved with his family to Palmyra, New York, in 1816. Mormons believe that God the Father and Jesus came to Joseph in the spring of 1820 and told him to restore the one true church. This episode is called the First Vision story and constitutes one of the most important historic claims of Mormonism.

Smith also claimed that on September 21, 1823, an angel named Moroni told him of gold plates buried in the hill Cumorah (near Palmyra) that contain the full gospel. Joseph said he unearthed the gold plates in 1827 and translated the ancient writing on them into The Book of Mormon, which was published in 1830. That same year the Mormon Church was founded. Smith also claimed to receive direct revelations from God throughout his leadership as the first prophet of the church.

Mormons settled in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois after the early years in New York State. They were persecuted heavily during their time in Missouri, in part because of their radical claims about taking ownership in Jackson County. Smith proclaimed that Independence, Missouri, would be the site of the New Jerusalem predicted in the book of Revelation.

During the early 1840s, there was both internal dissent and external criticism about Smith, particularly because of his practice of plural marriage—a practice that Smith denied. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were killed by an anti-Mormon mob on June 27, 1844. Joseph was in jail in Carthage, Illinois, over charges of ordering the destruction of a newspaper called the Nauvoo Expositor, founded by a leading

ex-Mormon, William Law. The newspaper circulated the view that Smith believed in many gods and practiced polygamy."[1]

B. From *What The Cults Believe: "*Born in Sharon, Vermont, in 1805, Smith had moved to Palmyra, New York. There, in 1820, he reported seeing his first heavenly vision. Two personages appeared. Their "brightness and glory defy all description.… One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"

There followed a series of visitations from a "resurrected personage" named Moroni. These visitations culminated on September 22, 1827. Moroni delivered to Smith the "golden plates," the translation of which is known as the Book of Mormon. In May 1829, John the Baptist appeared and ordained Smith, along with Oliver Cowdery, to the Aaronic priesthood. In June of that same year, Peter, James, and John "came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood" (McConkie 478). This established the authority of the "Church," for without the "Melchizedek Priesthood" "salvation in the kingdom of God" is not "available for men on earth" (McConkie 479)."[2]

C. From *Religions A to Z:* "One should be suspicious about the Mormon gospel, given the dishonesty, arrogance, and immorality of Joseph Smith. In 1826, after his alleged visits from heavenly messengers, Smith was arrested for "glass looking" (use of a magic device to find buried treasure). Wes Walters discovered the court document that implicates Joseph Smith in this unlawful scheme. It is hard to trust Smith's integrity on heavenly treasure (the so-called "golden plates" buried by the angel) when he was a deceiver and a law breaker by attempting to find earthly treasure on the property of gullible individuals.

Further, the lying and scheming behind Joseph Smith's plural marriage discredits him as a prophet of God. In the Mormon History of the Church Smith expresses astonishment that he is being accused of having seven wives and claims that he has only one wife. In fact, as Mormon historians admit, he was married to at least thirty-three women besides his original wife. Some of these women had living husbands at the time. The history of Mormon polygamy, particularly in the case of its founding prophet, is a story of deception and unbearable heartache."[3]

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[1] James A. Beverley, *Religions A-Z* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2005), 133-34.

[2] Irvine Robertson, *What the Cults Believe* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991), 31.

[3] James A. Beverley, *Religions A-Z* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2005), 136.

D. When one looks into Mormonism it is clear that Joseph Smith came from a family enamored with superstitions, myths, divining, and treasure hunting. Joseph was caught up in these things as well. The Bible and Christianity were not the foundation of his "ministry," but get rich quick schemes, treasure hunting, power, deception, and lust. Smith was even arrested after supposedly receiving the golden plates for using a "seeing glass" in an attempt to find buried treasure. Smith's tales of alleged revelations, visions, and encounters combined with his charismatic personality preyed upon the hopeful desires of undiscerning people. Once the deception started to spread Smith went with it, expanding his power and multiplying his lies. This, in turn, created fear and provoked others to anger, eventually leading to his imprisonment and murder. His death, in the minds of many as "martyrdom for the faith," became the seal of his authenticity. The history of Mormonism is very fascinating, but also very sad. It shows how a wicked young man can be used by Satan to spread a lie and be the instrument to lead millions to hell.

II. EFFECTIVENESS OF MORMONISM

Mormonism has seen growth in recent years while many religions and main line denominations have seen decline.[4] Growth has been especially significant in Latin American countries. Why is this? Let's consider some of the factors.

A. **Mormonism Apparent Similarities to Christianity** – Mormonism uses many Christian terms and in recent years Mormons have tried to let others know that they too are Christians. There has been a big push within Mormon hierarchy to figure out Christianity so they can appear to be Christians. Below is a quote from a Mormon website. Notice how "Christian" it sounds:

> Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and the Son of God. He is our Redeemer. The Holy Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ's mother was Mary, His father on earth was Joseph, that He was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth, and labored with Joseph as a carpenter. When he turned 30, He began a three-year ministry of teaching, blessing, and healing the people of the Holy Land. He also organized His Church and gave His apostles "power and authority" (Luke 9:1) to assist in His work.

[4] http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5150AK20090206

> But what do we mean when we say He is the Savior of the world? The Redeemer? Each of these titles point to the truth that Jesus Christ is the only way by which we can return to live with our Heavenly Father. Jesus suffered and was crucified for the sins of the world, giving each of God's children the gift of repentance and forgiveness. Only by His mercy and grace can anyone be saved. His subsequent resurrection prepared the way for every person to overcome physical death as well. These events are called the Atonement. In short, Jesus Christ saves us from sin and death. For that, he is very literally our Savior and Redeemer. In the future Jesus Christ will return to reign on earth in peace for a thousand years. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and He will be our Lord forever.[5]

The quote above is from the Mormon cult, which teaches a false gospel, says Jesus and Satan are brothers, that men can become gods, that salvation is by works, etc. Mormonism is not Christian. Yes, it uses many of the same terms, but it redefines them in order to seduce people. People are drawn in by what appears to be orthodox Christian claims but only later, after sacrificing to get in, discover the truth of what Mormonism teaches. Many Mormons never really learn what Mormonism is all about. They have no idea, for instance, that the secret rituals and symbols of Mormonism are borrowed from the Free Masonry cult.

B. **Apparent Morals and Pro-Family Agenda** – There is no doubt that Mormonism has what appears to be a wholesome pro-family agenda. Mormon missionaries are clean cut, Mormon families often dress modestly and encourage family activities. They encourage moral purity and have training centers specifically targeting youth. The externals of Mormonism today are winsome though the foundation of the movement is built upon polygamy, polyandry, adultery, and fornication. Joseph Smith himself was a sexual predator.[6]

C. **Claim to Believe the Bible** – Mormons claim to believe in the Bible. Most do not realize what this means exactly. They believe the Bible as long as it is interpreted their way and as long as it doesn't contradict the writings of Joseph Smith. When push comes to shove they often resort to personal

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[5] http://www.mormon.org/jesus-christ?gclid=CP7Nk-K6kqYCFQdMgwod_i9unQ

[6] To see chart and brief history of Joseph Smith's wives -- http://www.irr.org/mit/Joseph-Smith-Plural-Wives-Wiki-Chart.html. Also watch Sarah Tanner's discussion of Joseph Smith at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=153jwQlVkB4&feature=player_embedded

experience as a validation of the truth of Mormonism, "I prayed about it and felt a burning in the bosom, therefore I know Mormonism is true." The fact is any Mormon "living prophet" who speaks those oracles, supercedes the Word of God. In the end, the Bible is the least authoritative source of information in Mormonism.

D. **Forced Tithing** – Mormonism enforces tithing and other offerings above the tithe. Thus Mormonism brings in huge amounts of cash. In the average Protestant evangelical church about 20 percent of the people do 90 percent of the giving. Over 50 percent give little or nothing. What this means is that if everyone tithed in the average Protestant evangelical church, the church budget would be approximately 5 times larger, providing monies to expand and engage in many ministry endeavors. In most cases, Mormons are required to appear before the bishop at the end of the year and show proof, usually tax statements, that they have been faithful to give at least 10% to Mormonism. If they have failed, they are required to pay "back tithes." Brigham Young himself made it clear that all Mormons must tithe.[7]

E. **Missionary Service** – Every Mormon is strongly encouraged, if they are able, to serve two years as a missionary. Most young men serve right out of high school and young women a few years after high school. Senior citizens are also encouraged to serve as missionaries. Thus the proselytizing force of Mormonism grows in proportion to the movement.

F. **Targeting of High Schools and Colleges** – Mormonism often has what are called "Seminaries" across the street from high schools. They often work with the schools to give students credit for classes taken at the seminary. Being close to the school, Mormons are easily able to invite their friends, who are proselytized. Mormons often send a higher concentration of missionaries to college towns in order to win the next generation to Mormonism.

G. **Huge Business Holdings** – The present holdings of Mormonism are worth more than 30 billion dollars. This attracts worldly people and also provides Mormonism with funds to attract and proselytize converts. They build beautiful wards, seminaries, and have an excess of monies which make them look as if they are "blessed by God." False religions have often used riches to seduce converts. Mormonism is no different.

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[7]Brigham Young, *Deseret News,* 1850-09-14, pg. 111.
http://biblioteca.universia.net/html_bura/ficha/params/id/46946664.html

H. **Satanic And Demonic Support** – When Paul wrote to Timothy in **I Tim. 4:1-3** he said, "*But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth*." John writes in **I Jn. 4:1,** "*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world*." These and other texts teach us that while men promote false doctrine, the origin of false doctrine is demonic. Demons use men to promote lies. Satan, being the father of lies and purveyor of lies, is behind all false religion. This is the primary reason for the success of Mormonism.

III. THE JESUS CHRIST OF MORMONISM

The Jesus of Mormonism is a very complex subject, especially if you have learned about Jesus from the Bible first. A person having some knowledge of Christ from the Bible and then converting to Mormonism discovers first that about the only thing similar to the biblical Jesus and the Jesus of Mormonism is Jesus' name, that He died on the cross, and rose again from the grave. Yet even these foundational truths about Jesus are given totally different meaning and purpose. Thus, as one enters into the study of Jesus from the Mormon perspective, an entirely new and false Jesus appears, not the Jesus of the Bible. Below are a few summary statements about the Mormon Jesus and then some more specific details about the Mormon Jesus.

A. General Summaries of The Mormon Jesus

1. *The Truth About World Views* says: "Mormonism teaches that Jesus is a separate god from the Father (Elohim) and is the spirit child of the Father and Mother in heaven. He is, therefore, the "elder brother" of all human spirit beings. His body was created through sexual union between Elohim and Mary. In fact, Mormonism teaches that Jesus was married, as a polygamist, to the two Marys and Martha. His death on Calvary's cross does not provide full atonement, but does guarantee resurrection for everyone."[8]

[8] James P. Eckman, *The Truth About Worldviews : A Biblical Understanding of Worldview Alternatives* (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 101.

2. *What Cult's Believe* summarizes Mormon teaching on Christ saying: "Among the spirit children of Elohim, the first-born was and is Jehovah, or Jesus Christ, to whom all others are juniors. (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine,* pg. 70) "This distinction as "first-born" describes Christ's relationship to all God's children. Angels and demons, as well as human beings, are included. Various types of beings serve God as angels, or messengers. All were the children of the Father. "The devil … is a spirit son of God who was born in the morning of pre-existence" (McConkie 193). Devils, or demons, "are the spirit beings who followed Lucifer in his war of rebellion in preexistence" (McConkie 195). One-third of the spirit children of God followed Lucifer in that rebellion. The difference between Christ and man or demon is therefore one of degree, or of position, and not of kind. This rejects any thought of His distinctive deity."[9]

B. **Some Specifics About the Mormon Jesus**

1. *Jesus and Satan are sexually begotten brothers and sons of God, literally.* Mormonism teaches that God the Father had many sexually begotten sons. Jesus was the first born in the flesh, having been conceived by a physical relationship between God the father and Mary. Jesus and Satan were also sired in heaven and both were candidates for "Savior of the World." Each presented a plan to the "Council of the gods" about being the savior of the world. Jesus' plan was chosen because his included freedom of the will (Arminian like) while Satan's plan did not (Calvinistic). Satan could have been savior of the world if he had formulated a better plan.[10]

   a. Brigham Young said: "When the time came that His first-born, the Saviour, should come into the world and take a tabernacle, the Father came himself and favored that Spirit with a tabernacle instead of letting any other man do it. The Saviour was begotten by the Father of His spirit, by the same being who is the Father of our Spirits, and that is all the organic difference between Jesus Christ and you and me."[11]

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[9]Irvine Robertson, *What the Cults Believe* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991), 40-41. McConkie was a Mormon who served as one of the twelve apostles from 1972 until his death in 1985.

[10]Thelma Geer, *Mormonism, Mama, & Me,* (Tucson AZ: Calvary Missionary Press, 1980) 16-17.

[11]Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, 218.

b. Orson Pratt, one of the original apostles chosen by Joseph Smith, wrote in a Mormon publication called *The Seer,* the details concerning Jesus' conception saying: "If none but Gods will be permitted to multiply immortal children, it follows that each God must have one or more wives. God, the Father of our spirits, became the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. Hence, the Father saith concerning him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." We are informed in the first chapter of Luke, that Mary was chosen by the Father as a choice virgin, through whom He begat Jesus. The angel said unto the Virgin Mary, "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." After the power of the Highest had overshadowed Mary, and she had by that means conceived, she related the circumstance to her cousin Elizabeth in the following words: He that is Mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name-" It seems from this relation that the Holy Ghost accompanied "the Highest" when He overshadowed the Virgin Mary and begat Jesus; and from this circumstance some have supposed that the body of Jesus was begotten of the Holy Ghost without the instrumentality of the immediate presence of the Father. There is no doubt that the Holy Ghost came upon Mary to sanctify her, and make her holy, and prepare her to endure the glorious presence of "the Highest," that when "He" should "overshadow" her she might conceive, being filled with the Holy Ghost; hence the angel said, as recorded in Matthew, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost;" that is, the Holy Ghost gave her strength to abide the presence of the Father without being consumed; but it was the personage of the Father who begat the body of Jesus; and for this reason Jesus is called "the Only Begotten of the Father ;" that is, the only one in this world whose fleshly body was begotten by the Father. There were millions of sons and daughters whom He begat before the foundation of this world, but they were spirits, and not bodies of flesh and bones; whereas, both the spirit and body of Jesus were begotten by the Father-the spirit having been begotten in heaven many ages before the tabernacle was begotten upon the earth.

The fleshly body of Jesus required a Mother as well as a Father. Therefore, the Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been associated together in the capacity of Husband and Wife"; hence the Virgin Mary

> must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father: we use the term lawful Wife, because it would be blasphemous in the highest degree to say that He overshadowed her or begat the Saviour unlawfully. It would have been unlawful for any man to have interfered with Mary, who was already espoused to Joseph; for such a heinous crime would have subjected both the guilty parties to death, according to the law of Moses. But God having created all men and women, had the most perfect right to do with His own creation, according to His holy will and pleasure: He had a lawful right to overshadow the Virgin Mary in the capacity of a husband, and beget a Son, although she was espoused to another; for the law which He gave to govern men and women was not intended to govern Himself, or to prescribe rules for his own conduct. It was also lawful in Him, after having thus dealt with Mary, to give her to Joseph her espoused husband. Whether God the Father gave Mary to Joseph for time only, or for time and eternity, we are not informed. Inasmuch as God was the first husband to her, it may be that He only gave her to be the wife of Joseph while in this mortal state, and that He intended after the resurrection to again take her as one of his own wives to raise up immortal spirits in eternity.[12]

The implications of Pratt's doctrine is that Mary was not a virgin, that God the Father has a fleshly body, had sexual intercourse with Mary, has sexual relations in heaven, etc. Thus, one begins to see a very close resemblance of Mormonism to Greek mythology, when the god Zeus came to earth and had sexual relations with a mortal to produce Hercules.

2. *Jesus was a polygamist.*

   a. Apostle Orson Hyde explains and defends Jesus' polygamy saying: "It is true that the people of Utah believe in and practice polygamy. Not because our natural desires lead us into that condition and state of life, but because our God hath commanded it, and wishing to comply with that as well as with all others of His commands, we are as we are. We also wish to be counted Abraham's children, to whom the promises were made, and also with whom the covenants

[12] Scanned Edition of *The Seer*, 1853, pg. 158. Google Books http://books.google.com/books?pg=PA158&lpg=PA158&dq=%22if%20none%20but%20gods%20will%20be%20permitted%22&sig=tQG30CaKQ6op4cVFiBNy2uAmw4I&ei=QdEcTdmDEofCsAOgu8yQCg&ct=result&sqi=2&id=ikM9AAAAYAAJ&ots=BVHlG2826K&output=text

were established; and being told that if we are the children of Abraham, we will do the works of Abraham, we are not a little anxious to do as he did. Among other things that he did, he took more than one wife. In this he was not alone, for this example was copied by most of the ancient worthies and others who succeeded him under the same everlasting covenant. Even the wisest and best men-men after God's own heart, entered the most deeply into this practice. Nor was this practice limited to the days of the Old Testament.

It will be borne in mind that once on a time, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and on a careful reading of that transaction, it will be discovered that no less a person than Jesus Christ was married on that occasion. If he was never married, his intimacy with Mary and Martha, and the other Mary also whom Jesus loved, must have been highly unbecoming and improper to say the best of it.[13]

b. Elder Jedediah M. Grant, first quotes and then defends the heathen first century philosopher Celsus saying: “The grand reason why the Gentiles and philosophers of his school persecuted Jesus Christ, was, because he had so many wives; there were Elizabeth, and Mary, and a host of others that followed him." After Jesus went from the stage of action, the Apostles followed the example of their master. For instance, John the beloved disciple, writes in his second Epistle, *"Unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth."* Again, he says, "Having many things to write unto you (or communicate), I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, *that our joy may be full*." Again-*"The children of thy elect sister greet thee*." This ancient philosopher says they were both John's wives. Paul says, "Mine answer to them that do examine me is this ...

Have we not power to *lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles*, and as *the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas*." He, according to Celsus, had a numerous train of wives.

The grand reason of the burst of public sentiment in anathemas upon Christ and his disciples, causing his

[13] http://jod.mrm.org/4/257 A Mormon website where a digital version of Hyde’s sermon appears “Man the Head of Woman-Kingdom of God-The Seed of Christ-Polygamy-Society in Utah.” See also *Journal of Discourses,* Vol. 4, 259-260.

> crucifixion, was evidently based upon polygamy, according to the testimony of the philosophers who rose in that age. A belief in the doctrine of a plurality of wives caused the persecution of Jesus and his followers. We might almost think they were "Mormons."[14]

In reading Mormon doctrine it is obvious that it is a sensual and immoral religion. Immorality was practiced among the founders and justified by reading into certain biblical texts the same immoral practices, claiming it is the example set by Jesus and the Apostles. Apostle Peter, speaking of false teachers sums up the reality of Mormonism well in **II Pet. 2:1-3** saying, *"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep."*

C. Chart Comparing Mormon Jesus and the Jesus of the Bible[15]

The Mormon Jesus Christ	The Biblical Jesus Christ
A created being; the elder brother of Lucifer [Satan]	Uncreated God
Common (one of many gods) and, in some ways, of minor importance in the larger Mormon Cosmology	Unique (the Second Person of the one and only Godhead) and of supreme importance throughout time, eternity and all creation
Conceived by a physical sex act between God the Father (Adam or Elohim) and Mary, thus not a true virgin birth	Conceived by the Holy Spirit, who supernaturally "overshadowed" Mary, thus a true virgin birth
Once sinful and imperfect	Eternally sinless and perfect
Earned his own salvation (exaltation, godhood)	As God, never required salvation

[14] http://jod.mrm.org/1/341 Mormon website with scanned edition of *Journal of Discourses,* A Discourse by Elder Jedediah M. Grant, "Uniformity," Delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, Aug. 7, 1853

[15] This chart adapted from information taken from John Ankerberg & John Weldon's, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions,* (Eugene OR, Harvest House Publishers, 1999) 299, and H. Wayne House's *Charts of Cults, Sects, & Religious Movements,* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000) 65-67.

The Mormon Jesus Christ	The Biblical Jesus Christ
A married polygamist, who had children by his many wives.	An unmarried monogamist
Jesus is not God the Son, the second person of the trinity, who is equal to the Father.	Jesus is God the Son, second person of the Trinity, who is equal with the Father and the Spirit.
Before becoming a man, Jesus existed in the spirit world as the eldest of many spirit children born to God the Father.	Jesus has existed for all eternity as God the Son, with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He did not come into existence after the Father.
Jesus rose from the dead, but his resurrection did not destroy death and sin, it only insured that men would be resurrected (brought back to life) with a permanently joined body and soul.	The death of Jesus satisfied the holiness and justice of the Father in relation to the sin of mankind and the punishment for sin. The cross completely dealt with sin (Col. 2:13-15; Rom. 5:1).