

What Is the Difference between Mormonism & Christianity?

Mini-Lecture #11

River Valley Community Church

By Rodney Combs, Ph.D.

A BRIEF MORMON HISTORY

Comparison of Beliefs (Mormon & Christianity)

* Primary Texts: *The Book of Mormon: Another Translation of Jesus Christ TBM*, *Doctrine and Covenants (D&C)*, and *Pearl of Great Price (PGP)*. Excellent secondary references; some were used here: Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*; www.4truth.net; www.Mormon.org.

Church:

Mormon

- The LDS is the only _____.
- Jesus told Joseph Smith, Jr. not to join any other church for they were all _____ (*PGP*, History 1:19).
- Since the New Testament times, all churches became _____ and no true church existed until the "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" was organized.
- True and full _____ is found only in the LDS Church.

Christianity

- The true church of Jesus Christ has existed since _____.
- Jesus promised that his church (made up of truly baptized and regenerate believers) would not fail (Matt. 16:17-18).
- The marks of a true church include faithfulness to the teaching of the _____ (Acts 2:42), not the creation of new doctrines.

Authority of the Prophet

Mormon

- A prophet is someone with authority to act in the name of God.
- Joseph Smith, Jr. received _____ authority at the hands of John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John who received the same power and authority from Jesus.
- The Mormon scriptures state that Latter-Day Saints, "shalt give heed unto all his [the prophet's] words and commandments . . . For his word ye shall receive as if from mine [God's] own mouth" (*D&C*, 21:4-5).

Christianity

- A prophet is God's spokesperson, whose words were always consistent with the _____ and pointed to _____.
- A test of genuineness of a prophet was whether or not the prediction came true (Deut. 18:20-22).
- Smith predicted that a temple would be built in western _____ in his lifetime. It still isn't there.
- God's method of communicating was _____ throughout history and confirmed by _____ sources.

Scripture

Mormon

- Mormons accept four books as scripture and the word of God: *The King James Version of the Bible*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price*.
- *The King James Version* of the Bible is accepted as true but only “as far as it is _____ correctly,” (a common statement in Mormon beliefs).
- Joseph Smith, Jr. made over 600 corrections.
- *The Book of Mormon* “is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible” and “contains, as does the Bible, the fullness of the everlasting gospel.”
- *The Book of Mormon* has the “fullness of the gospel,” stating that the Bible is missing “plain and precious parts” (*TBM*, 1 Nephi 13:26), and tells the story of the new groups in the Americas from _____ B.C. to about _____ A.D.
- That story was preserved in Reformed Egyptian on golden plates, translated by Smith by the “gift and power of God” (*D&C* 135:3). Then the plates were transported back to heaven by the messenger, Moroni.
- *The Doctrines and Covenants* contains the revelations (138 of them) of the Mormon prophets (mostly from Joseph Smith, Jr.). This is where the majority of unique Mormon doctrine can be found, including their priesthood, baptism for the dead, godhood, and polygamy.
- *The Pearl of Great Price* contains Joseph Smith, Jr.’s religious history, the *Articles of Faith*, the *Book of Abraham*, and the *Book of Moses*.
- The Mormon’s record claims that Christ visited the American continent after his crucifixion and resurrection. He revealed himself, preached the Gospel, and instituted for them baptism and communion.

Christianity

- The Bible says that it is complete, and it warns against adding to or detracting from its teaching (Rev. 22:18-19, though perhaps this is only about Revelation; Deut. 4:2).
- The Bible of 66 books of Christianity has the stamp of God’s divine revelation (2 Tim. 3:15-27; 2 Pet. 1:19-21) and fits the criteria for acceptance in the canon, whereas the Mormon books do not.
- There are numerous _____ in *The Book of Mormon* (there have been many revisions) as well as plagiarisms (many directly from the KJ), historical and archeological mistakes and contradictions, and anachronisms. (See Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*; and the handout). The Bible, however, God’s revelation, is _____.

God

Mormon

- “God” is referred to as “_____.”
- Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three _____ gods.
- Heavenly Father was a _____ in a prior existence. Having kept the requirements of

Mormonism, he was exalted to godhood and given his own universe.

- God is confined to a “body of flesh and bones” (D&C, 130:22), and yet is omniscient and omnipotent (logically, he can’t be omnipresent).
- There are infinite numbers of _____ with their own universes.
- Heavenly Father births spiritual children in heaven who take on human life on earth.
- All humans are god’s heavenly children (including _____ and _____).

Christianity

- God is and has always been a _____ (John 4:24).
- Jesus was born from the virgin Mary from a miraculous conception in the power of the Holy Spirit; not conceived by God.
- Jesus was fully _____ from the beginning (John 1:1).
- There is only _____ God, who is a triune God.

Jesus

Mormon

- Jesus was Heavenly Father’s firstborn spirit child in heaven.
- He was begotten by God through Mary as in a “literal, full and complete sense” in the same “sense in which he is the son of Mary” (Bruce McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 1993, 67).
- Jesus’ atonement guaranteed resurrection and immortality for _____ humans.
- Jesus appeared to and taught the people of _____ (Israelites or Indians) after his resurrection and established the true church among them.
- All people are the literal younger _____ and _____ of Christ.

Christianity

- Jesus is fully _____, fully _____, eternally existent with the Father (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20).
- He was born of the virgin, conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20-21).
- There is no indication that he appeared to anyone in America, historically or biblically.

People

Mormon

- People exist in heaven and then are born on earth in order to exercise freedom to choose good or evil and to gain a _____ for the resurrection.
- After the resurrection, worthy males who have kept Mormon teaching can bring their wives to heaven and achieve status equal to Heavenly Father.
- In the resurrection, faithful Mormons receive _____.

Christianity

- People are _____ beings.
- They do not exist prior to birth. God says he formed us in our mother's womb (Is. 44:2).
- Sin is a part of every person's human nature, and only by faith in Christ (and faith alone, Eph. 2:8-9) is freedom from the power and punishment of sin received (1 Cor. 15:22).
- God will transform us into _____ (Rom. 8:28-30), but there is no biblical evidence that people will ever become gods (Rev. 1:5-6) or equal to God.

Salvation

Mormon

- All people have eternal life, but only the most faithful Mormons gain godhood or enter the celestial kingdom (*D&C 19:16-17*).
- "In order to obtain this ultimate step, Mormons must exercise faith in the God of Mormonism, its Christ, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; exercise repentance; and be baptized in the LDS Church. Additionally, Mormons must keep the "Word of Wisdom" by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine; tithe to the church; attend weekly sacrament meetings; support the Mormon prophet; do temple works; and be active in their support of the church." (Phil Roberts, *Mormons*, 4truth.net)
- Mormonism teaches that almost every person who lived on earth will end up in one of three heavenly kingdoms: the Celestial, the Terrestrial, or the Telestial. All three kingdoms are described by Mormon literature with positive, glowing language. *D&C 76:89* described the bottom Telestial kingdom as that which "surpasses all understanding".
- There is a destiny called "_____." It is reserved for Satan, his demons, and extremely wicked people. Few people will end up there.
- Mormons can attain salvation into heaven after they are dead.

Christianity

- Salvation is from God's _____ and _____.
- Salvation comes through _____ in Jesus alone (John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8-9).
- There are only two eternal destinations, and everyone will end up in one or the other based upon their earthly decision for or against Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:46).

SUMMARY ISSUES

1. The _____ of Christianity and Mormonism is sometimes identical and often similar.
2. Remember, however, those words and ideas hold quite _____
_____ in Christianity and Mormonism.
3. The Mormon Jesus is not the same as the _____ Jesus of Christianity.
4. Salvation is by _____, but for the Mormon it involves a lifetime of repentance and special works.
5. If one believes in a god who is not the God of the historical, biblical faith, and if one trusts in Jesus who is not the Jesus of history, and if one's salvation is thought to be gained by faith in that Jesus and the additional duties of a church that was created in opposition to the church that the historical Jesus established, then it would be hard to consider such a person a Christian according to the Bible's definition.
6. To witness to a Mormon, you must prayerfully engage in conversation where you _____ terms, make sure biblical verses are _____ correctly, and stay focused on the central _____ and the biblical plan of salvation.
7. A genuine attempt by a Christian to understand _____ will develop a fresh perspective of what it must be like for a _____ to try to understand Christianity for the first time. And that could help us be better witnesses.