

Cults and Other “Gospels”

Recognizing and Understanding the Differences



Cults and Other “Gospels”

- ◆ **Remember our definition of a “cult”**
 - ◆ I've recommended six questions to ask yourself about any religious groups that seem at least potentially suspicious to you...
 1. Does the group have a prophet/founder who is revered by followers and claims to have *special* revelation from God or from angels?
 2. Are there authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to or instead of* the Bible?
 3. Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?
 4. What does the group believe regarding the Trinity? Is Jesus fully God, the second person of the Trinity? Is the Holy Spirit fully God, the third person of the Trinity?
 5. How does the group believe we are *saved*? By grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ, or by faith plus good works?
 6. What belief does the group hold regarding life after death? What is its concept of Heaven and Hell?



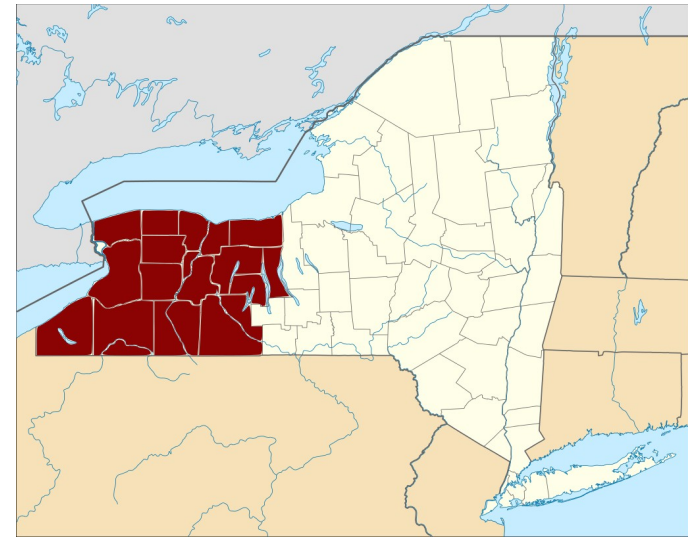
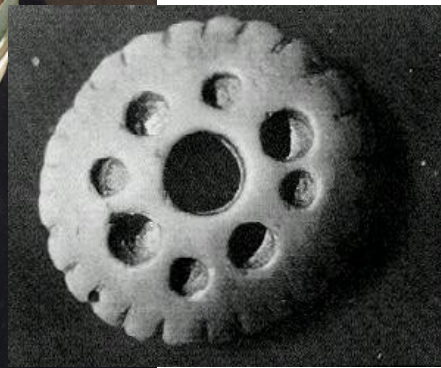
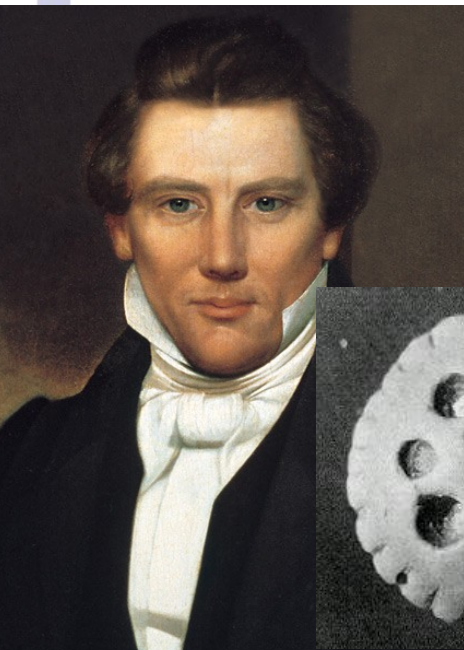
Cults and Other “Gospels”

- ◆ Introduction to Cults
- ◆ Peoples Temple
- ◆ **The Mormons**
(The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)



Mormons

- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **Who is their founder?**
 - ◆ **Joseph Smith, who was born in Vermont in 1805 but grew up in west New York's "burnt district"**
 - ◆ **He and his father were famous in the area for being paid to use their "peep stones" to find buried treasure for people in the forest (even though he was sued at least *twice* for fraud, and forced to admit under oath that "he could not see in a stone now, nor never could; and that his former pretensions in that respect were all false. He then promised to give up his old habits of digging for money and looking into stones...")**



Mormons

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- ◆ **He and his father were famous in the area for being paid to use their "peep stones" to find buried treasure for people in the forest**

- ◆ **But in 1820, he was visited by God the Father and Jesus Christ, who informed him that every existing Christian church was false and corrupt**

- ◆ **Years later, the angel Moroni appeared to him and told him to use his "peep stone" to find and dig up a series of golden plates which Moroni had buried in New York 1,200 years before, when he was still just a human, Jewish prophet**

- ◆ **Once translated from their original Reformed Egyptian, the plates gave Smith the text that became the *Book of Mormon* —and last week, we discussed several issues related to all of that...**



Mormons

- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **Do they have any authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to or instead of* the Bible?**
 - ◆ ***The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, The Pearl of Great Price, Articles of Faith, etc.***
 - ◆ **The problem is, once you start “tweaking” the **T**ruth, then you kind of have to *keep* tweaking it, because your tweaks don't hold up under scrutiny since you've damaged **T**ruth's structural integrity**
 - ◆ **So, a series of new prophecies and pronouncements have emerged over the years to subtly and/or significantly *change* Mormonism here and there to increasingly distance the religion from orthodox Christianity...**

THE
DOCTRINE
AND
COVENANTS
THE
PEARL OF
GREAT PRICE

ARTICLES of FAITH
TALMAGE

THE
BOOK
OF
MORMON

ANOTHER TESTAMENT
OF JESUS CHRIST



Mormons

- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?**
 - ◆ **“My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects [i.e.; Christian churches] was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong) and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: 'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.' He again forbade me to join with any of them...”**
—Joseph Smith, in *The Pearl of Great Price*

THE
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Mormons

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 - ♦ **Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?**
 - ♦ “My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects [i.e.; Christian churches] was right, that I might know which to join...”
 - ♦ It was revealed to Smith that “the Lord would cut short His work in righteousness and except the Church receive the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fail. Upon my return from Amherst Conference, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures [i.e.; the *Book of Mormon*]. From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of men had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled.”

—*The Teachings of Joseph Smith*



Mormons

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 - ◆ It was revealed to Smith that “the Lord would cut short His work in righteousness and except the Church receive the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fail...”
 - ◆ **God explained, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that there are records which contain much of my gospel, which have been kept back because of the wickedness of the people; And now I command you, that if you have good desires—a desire to lay up treasures for yourself in heaven—then shall you assist in bringing to light, with your gift, those parts of my scriptures which have been hidden because of iniquity. And now, behold, I give unto you, and also unto my servant Joseph, the keys of this gift, which shall bring to light this ministry...”**

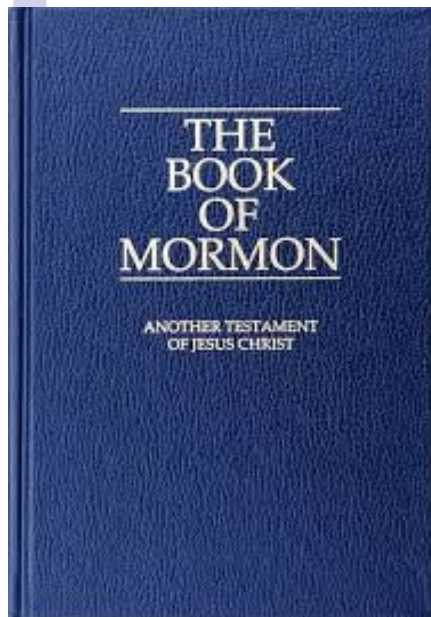
THE
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—*Doctrine and Covenants 6:26-28*

Mormons

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 - ◆ **Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?**
 - ◆ **Fortunately, “I know just as well what to teach this people and just what to say to them and what to do in order to bring them into the celestial kingdom... I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call Scripture. Let me have the privilege of correcting a sermon, and it is as good Scripture as they deserve. The people have the oracles of God continually...”**
—Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* (1870)



Mormons

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 - ◆ **Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?**
 - ◆ **Questions were put to Smith about the LDS faith, which he specifically answered in his *Teachings*:**
 - First*—“Do you believe the Bible?”**
 - Smith*—“If we do, we are the only people under heaven that does, for there are none of the religious sects of the day that do.”**
 - Second*—“Wherein do you differ from other sects?”**
 - Smith*—“In that we believe the Bible, and all other sects profess to believe their *interpretations* of the Bible, and their creeds.”**
 - Third*—“Will everybody be damned, but Mormons?”**
 - Smith*—“Yes, and a great portion of them, unless they repent, and work righteousness.”**
 - ◆ **Please remember this the next time that a Mormon says, “We're just Christians, the same as you...”**
(NOTE: It's not uncommon for Mormons to be very uncomfortable seeing any non-Mormons as anything but ongoing missions projects —and to *shun* any truly active Christians)



Mormons

- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **What does the group believe regarding the Trinity? Is Jesus fully God, the second person of the Trinity? Is the Holy Spirit fully God, the third person of the Trinity?**

- ◆ **“There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things—by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible: whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space—They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness: The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made, or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or, rather, man was formed after his likeness, and in his image...”**

—Joseph Smith, in his *Lectures on Faith*

(NOTE: The *Lectures* were at one point part of the Doctrine and Covenants, but were later removed because they no longer reflected official church doctrine—specifically, that the Father is a “personage of *spirit...*”)

THE
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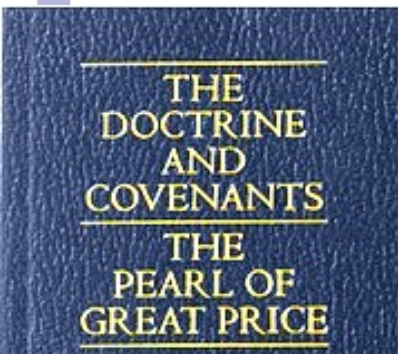
Mormons

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—Joseph Smith, in a funeral sermon in *Times and Seasons* (NOTE: *The Book of Abraham* gives the name of the planet God grew up on as Kolob—stating that “One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of the Earth.”)

Joseph Smith got that information from studying his papyri—particularly the one described as a “singular scrawl”

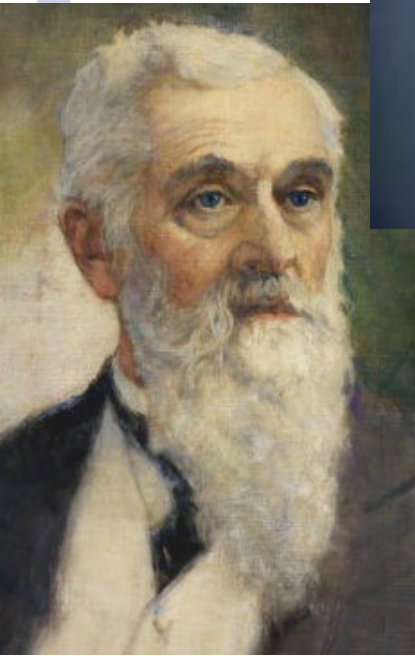


Mormons

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—Joseph Smith, in a funeral sermon in *Times and Seasons*
 - ◆ **“We were begotten by our Father in Heaven; the person of our Father in Heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by His Father; and again, He was begotten by a still more ancient Father and so on, from generation to generation, from one heavenly world to another still more ancient...”**
—Orson Pratt, in *The Seer*



◆ L



◆ **“As man is now, God once was; as God now is, man may become.”**

—Lorenzo Snow, June of 1840

(NOTE: In an episode of *Battlestar Galactica*, evolved, benevolent aliens told our heroes,

“As you are now, we once were; as we now are, you may become...”—same idea)



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ Oh, you may laugh, but *Battlestar Galactica's* creator, Glen A. Larson, was a devout Mormon
- ♦ So he made a TV show about a lost, vaguely Egyptian tribe on a lonely voyage to a place they've never seen (just like the Nephites had been) —a tribe that is governed by a Quorum of Twelve— (just like the Mormons are) as they launch out from the planet of the gods, Kobol (just like our God did from Kolob) under the wise and benevolent guidance of Adama (just like Adam—the name that God took on Earth)



Mormons

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 - ♦ **What does the group believe regarding the Trinity? Is Jesus fully God, the second person of the Trinity? Is the Holy Spirit fully God, the third person of the Trinity?**

- ♦ **“When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Archangel, the Ancient of Days! about whom holy men have written and spoken—He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do... When the virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who was the father? He was the first of the human family... Jesus our elder brother was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden and who is our father in heaven.”**

—Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* (1852)

- ♦ **Read Genesis 2:7-8**
- ♦ **Read Matthew 1:20**
- ♦ **Read 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 and 15:47**
- ♦ **Read Hebrews 1:5 and 1:13-14**



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ So to sum up—our God was born and raised on the planet Kolob, then came here to start His own planet, calling himself “Adam”

(or Michael—though, to be fair, not every Mormon believes that Adam-God thing nowadays—and many forget that any Mormon ever even preached that, such as Quorum member Bruce McConkie—

“There are those who believe or say they believe that Adam is our father and our god, that he is the father of our spirits and our bodies, and that he is the one we worship. The devil keeps this heresy alive as a means of obtaining converts to cultism. It is contrary to the whole plan of salvation set forth in the scriptures, and anyone who has read the Book of Moses, and anyone who has received the temple endowment, has no excuse whatever for being led astray by it.”

—Bruce McConkie, in his *Seven Deadly Heresies* speech
“Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or George Q. Cannon or whoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation.”

—Bruce McConkie,

in *Highlights from His Life & Teachings*)



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ So to sum up—our God was born and raised on the planet Kolob, then came here to start His own planet, calling himself “Adam”
- ◆ “Remember that God our Heavenly Father was perhaps once a child and mortal like we are and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement: has moved forward and overcome until He has arrived at the point where He now is...”

—Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*

- ◆ But then again, “There are those who say that God is progressing in knowledge and is learning new truths. This is false—utterly, totally, and completely. There is not one sliver of truth in it... God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He knows all things, he has all power, and he is everywhere present by the power of his Spirit. And unless we know and believe this doctrine we cannot gain faith unto life and salvation.”

—Bruce McConkie, in *Seven Deadly Heresies*

- ◆ “It is my province to teach to the Church what the doctrine is. It is your province to echo what I say or to remain silent.”

—Bruce McConkie, in a letter to Dr. Eugene England



Mormons



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—Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*
 - ◆ “In the beginning, the head of the gods called a council of the gods and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it...”
—Joseph Smith, *Journal of Discourses*

(NOTE: God had several sons before time began—including such luminaries as Jesus, Satan, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph Smith—but Jesus is the only one born of God's sexual union with Mary)
(NOTE²: *Satan* asked to become humanity's Saviour and Redeemer, but God chose Jesus instead because Satan wanted to save *everybody*, while Jesus championed humanity's right to choose for themselves whom they would follow—see Moses 4:1-4)



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ So to sum up—our God was born and raised on the planet Kolob, then came here to start His own planet, calling himself “Adam”
 - ◆ “The Father has a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's; the Son also...”
—*Doctrine and Covenants 130:22*
 - ◆ “Each of these Gods, including Jesus Christ and his Father, being in possession of not merely an organized spirit, but a glorious immortal body of flesh and bones, is subject to the laws which govern, of necessity, even the most refined order of physical existence...”
—Parley Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*
 - ◆ “If God possesses a form, that form is of necessity of definite proportions and therefore of limited extension in space. It is impossible for Him to occupy at one time more than one space of such limits...”
—James Talmage, in *Articles of Faith*



Mormons



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—Parley Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*
 - ◆ “Gods exist, and we had better strive to prepare to be one with them.”
—Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*
(NOTE: Yes, a key point in Mormon doctrine is that good Mormon males can become gods themselves —but more on that later)



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ So to sum up—our God was born and raised on the planet Kolob, then came here to start His own planet, calling himself “Adam”
- ♦ “Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God! I say that is a strange God anyhow—three in one, and one in three! It is a curious organization. All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God—he would be a giant or a monster...”

—Joseph Smith, *Teachings of Joseph Smith*

(NOTE: The ironic thing is that, even though Smith is being sarcastically dismissive of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, I actually half-agree with him—yes, God is wonderfully big...)



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ **Smith preached at Elder King Follet's funeral:**
 - ♦ “God was once as we are now, an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens... I say, if you were to see Him today, you would see Him like a man in form—like yourselves and all the person, image and very form of man. I'm going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for certainty the character of God, to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us, yea, that god Himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ did... Here then is eternal life--to know the only wise and true God, and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests, the same as all gods before you, namely by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead and are able to dwell in the everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those enthroned in everlasting power...”

—Joseph Smith, recorded in *Times and Seasons*



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

◆ Let's break out the main points there for a second:

- ◆ “I say, if you were to see Him today, you would see Him like a man in form—like yourselves and all the person, image and very form of man...”
- ◆ “I'm going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil...”
- ◆ “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for certainty the character of God, to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us...”
- ◆ “Here then is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God, and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests, the same as all gods before you...”
- ◆ Jesus Christ “is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) and “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24)
- ◆ “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me” (Isaiah 43:10) and “from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (Psalm 90:2)
- ◆ “How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord?” (Romans 11:33-34) and “the Father of the heavenly lights... does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17)
- ◆ “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent”—it was *Satan* who said, “your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5)

