

5 minute guide

to

MORMONISM

Des McCabe

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Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or more commonly known as the Mormon faith has over 14.4 million members and thousands of door to door preaching missionaries around the world. Mormons are Christians who believe Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world. Along with the King James Version of the bible, Latter-day Saints also study the Book of Mormon which is another testament of Jesus Christ. The Mormons believe the true church of Jesus Christ was restored in these days by God through the prophet Joseph Smith.

History

As with other Christian faiths, Jesus Christ is the foundation of Mormonism.

Jesus established His church on Earth during his mortal ministry. He taught His gospel and called twelve men to be His Apostles. He laid His hands on their heads to give them priesthood authority. His most important mission on the Earth was to complete the Atonement. In order to carry out the Atonement Christ had to come to the earth, suffer the penalty for the sins of everyone who would live on the earth, die on the cross and be resurrected. Latter-day Saints believe because of the resurrection and Atonement of Jesus Christ, all men and women can be saved through repentance and return to the Kingdom of God after this life on Earth.

After Christ left the earth many of his Apostles were also rejected and killed. Because of this, Mormons say that the priesthood was no longer present on the earth. This period is known to Mormons as "The Great Apostasy." During this time many churches emerged and truth-seeking people began to notice the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel as recorded in the bible had been changed or lost.

Mormons believe that in the 19th century God called Joseph Smith to be a prophet and through him restored the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. Joseph Smith lived in the eastern United States where there was great religious excitement at the time. Because of the many different churches with different opinions and teachings, Joseph Smith prayed to God to know which of these churches were true. Mormons believe that God and Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph and told him that none of the churches were true. There were many good people who believed in Christ and studied his gospel but they did not have all the truths or the priesthood authority to perform essential ordinances.

After this visit from the God and the Son Jesus Christ, other angels were sent to both Joseph Smith and his colleague Oliver Cowdery. John the Baptist came to them and gave them the Aaronic Priesthood, which includes the authority to perform baptism. Later three of Christ's original Apostles, Peter, James and John, came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and gave them the Melchizedek Priesthood, which restored the same authority given to Christ's Apostles. After he was given the priesthood authority, Joseph Smith was told to organize the Church of Jesus Christ again on the earth. Jesus Christ, through Joseph Smith, called twelve Apostles.

The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ and is an ancient volume of scripture studied by the Latter-day Saints. While the Bible is written by and about the people in the land of Israel and areas surrounding, and takes place from the creation of the world until shortly after the death of Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon contains the history and God's dealings with the people who lived in the Americas between approximately 600 BCE and 400 AD. The prophets in the Book of Mormon recorded God's dealings with His people, which were compiled by a prophet named Mormon on gold plates. These gold plates were hidden away until the book of scripture was ready to be translated through the power of God by Joseph Smith.

Once the Book of Mormon was translated, printed and made available for the public, the church was organized. Joseph Smith was sustained as prophet. God continued to give revelation to the prophets. Some of these revelations have been printed and make up the book of scripture called the Doctrine and Covenants. Latter-day Saints believe that God still gives direction and revelation to the prophets today. This revelation is given from the prophets to the church through a conference that is held twice a year (once in April and once in October), it is called General Conference.

A living prophet directs The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today and is the authorized successor to Joseph Smith. Mormons believe that the current prophet as well as his Apostles traces their authority to Jesus Christ in an unbroken chain of ordinations through Joseph Smith.

Growth

Upon organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830 there were about 56 men and women who gathered together in a log home in New York for the first meetings of this newly established church. After persecution and being forced out

of many areas in the eastern United States, the Latter-day Saints were led to the west. They finally settled in what is today called the state of Utah.

In 1901 there were approximately 300,000 members of the church. With many missionaries traveling around the world, by 1970 the Latter-day Saints had over 2.8 million members across the globe. The Mormon faith has a large emphasis on missionary work which is seen as a commandment of God, to share the gospel with all of His children on the earth. Latter-day Saint missionaries volunteer to serve as young as 18 years old for men and 19 years old for women. They leave their family, friends and normal lives behind for up to two years while they serve in whatever area of the world they are called to. According to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints statistical report of 2011 the church has over 14 million members and 55,000 full-time missionaries currently preaching around the world and another 22,000 church-service missionaries. Latter-day Saint missionaries are a large reason for the church's growth.

Beliefs

The easiest way to find out what the Mormons believe is to review their Articles of Faith. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote the Articles of Faith in response to a letter requesting to know what members of the Church believe. There are 13 basic points of belief among the Church.

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.
7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.
8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.
9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe

that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.
11. We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.
12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.
13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul. We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."

These articles are considered scripture by the Latter-day Saints and are included in the Doctrine and Covenants which is a book of modern day revelations.

One significant belief of the Latter-day Saints is "The Plan of Salvation" which is also referred to as "The Plan of Happiness", "The Merciful Plan" or "The Plan of Redemption." This plan explains where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. Mormons believe this plan to be God's plan for everyone on earth. It includes the creation of earth and man, the fall of Adam and Eve, our life on earth, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the spirit world, the resurrection, judgment, immortality and the kingdoms of glory. Mormons believe the key to this plan that makes it all possible is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This Atonement makes it possible for humans to repent and be forgiven. Latter-day Saints find direction, comfort and peace from this plan.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints adhere to the "Word of Wisdom." This is a law of health given to the prophet through revelation from the Lord. In the revelation God stated which foods are good to eat and which substances are not good for the body. In this law Mormons are commanded to not put alcoholic drinks, tobacco and tea and coffee into their bodies. In addition to those four things, anything harmful to the body that is taken into the body purposefully is not in harmony with the law. Latter-day Saints believe they will be blessed both physically and spiritually by obeying the Word of Wisdom.

Worship

Latter-day Saints see Sunday as the Holy day of rest. Members and non-members meet in church buildings for a block of meetings. One hour is held collectively in a chapel and is the most important part of the church service. This is called the Sacrament Meeting. For the next hour adults and children are separated into different classes and in the third hour the men and women are separated into individual classes.

The Sacrament Meeting consists of prayer, singing hymns and talks but the most important part is the administration of the sacrament. This is an essential ordinance within the church. Bread and water is blessed by those with priesthood authority and administered to the congregation. When partaking of the sacrament, members of the church are renewing the covenants they made with God at baptism. They promise to remember Him always, to look upon the name of Jesus Christ and to obey His commandments. In return for renewing these covenants Mormons believe they are blessed with the constant companionship of the Spirit of God and are clean from their sins as well.

The first Sunday of each month is considered "Fast Sunday." On this day Latter-day Saints are encouraged to fast. After the Administration of the Sacrament, members of the congregation are invited to the pulpit, if they desire, to bare their testimony of Jesus Christ, His gospel and His church. This allows any person the opportunity to proclaim what they believe to be true.

Ordinances

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ordinances are sacred acts performed by those with the priesthood authority. Mormons believe some ordinances are essential to exaltation and are called "saving ordinances." Saving ordinances include baptism, confirmation, ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood (for men), the temple endowment, sealing of children to parents in some cases and the marriage sealing.

Along with each of these ordinances comes covenants with the Lord. Other ordinances which are not considered essential are performed as well for comfort, guidance and encouragement. These ordinances are also performed by priesthood authority and include naming and blessing children, consecrating oil and administering to the sick and afflicted. Latter-day Saints believe these ordinances help them remember who they are, to remind them of their duty to God and that if they honor the ordinances, God will strengthen them.

The Latter-day Saints commonly practice ordinances for the dead which is called "redeeming the dead." This practice is for people who have died without having the opportunity to receive these ordinances in their own lives. Mormons believe that after death our spirits go to the spirit world where the gospel is preached to those who have died in their sins. They are taught the basic principles that the Church teaches on earth; faith in God, repentance of sin, baptism for the remission of sins, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands and other basic principles.

Mormons believe many who are taught welcome and accept the teachings but cannot receive priesthood ordinances for themselves because they do not have physical bodies. Members of the church can either do the work in behalf of their own ancestors who have died or submit their names to the temple for others to act as a proxy for the dead. These ordinances are performed in temples which are located all around the world. Ordinances for the dead include baptism, confirmation, receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood (for men), temple endowment and sealing husband to wife and children to parents.

Celebrations

Typically Latter-day Saints celebrate national holidays in whatever country they may live in. Church-wide celebrations include:

- Christmas: 25th December. This day celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ
- Easter: March/April. This day celebrates the resurrection of Christ from the tomb.

Blessing a baby, baptisms, receiving the temple endowment and marriage sealing are all considered reasons for celebration with family and friends.

Timeline

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| 1820: Spring | The First Vision. God and Jesus Christ appear to Joseph Smith. |
| 1823: September | The angel Moroni appears to Joseph Smith and tells him about the gold plates and the work he is called to do. |
| 1827: September | Joseph Smith receives the gold plates from Moroni and begins translating them. |
| 1829: May | The priesthood is restored to the earth. |
| 1830: March | The Book of Mormon is printed and made available to the public. |
| 1830: April | Christ's church is organized again upon the earth. Joseph Smith is sustained as prophet. |
| 1833: February | The Word of Wisdom is revealed. |
| 1836 | The first temple is completed in Kirtland, Ohio. Christ appears to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery there. |
| 1839 | Saints begin building Nauvoo, Illinois. |
| 1840 | Missionaries sent by Joseph Smith arrive in Great Britain. More than 6,000 people join the Church. |
| 1842: March | The Articles of Faith are published. |
| 1844: June | Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum are martyred in Carthage Jail. The Church continues to grow. |
| 1846: February | Under direction of new prophet Brigham Young, Latter-day Saints begin their journey west. |
| 1847: July | Brigham Young declares the Salt Lake valley the place for the Latter-day Saints to settle. |

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