

# Exploring Mormonism and the Scriptures

*An Exploration of the Bible and the Teachings  
of the Latter-day Saint Church*

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## Introduction:

When going on a trip or journey we should be asking at least three very pertinent questions...

1. Are you listening to the right people?
2. Are you getting the right directions?
3. Are you going to end up in the right destination?

There are various answers that could be given to those questions, but that begs the question...

“In light of what the Bible teaches versus what the Latter-day Saint Church teaches, which is true?” When it comes to our eternal soul we want to be absolutely sure we are listening to the right people (God, apostles, prophets, teachers, etc.), that we are getting the right directions (Scriptures, the plan of salvation, practices, etc.), and that we will end up in the right destination (heaven, hell, end-times, etc.). This is our chance to see how the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) answers those questions as opposed to how biblical Christianity answers those questions.

Before we answer those questions let's do a brief perusal of the history of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## **Where Mormonism Came From**

Mormonism was founded by Joseph Smith Jr. who was born in Sharon, Vermont on December 23, 1805. Eleven years later his family moved to Palmyra, New York. Beginning around 1819 there was an unusual amount of excitement on the subject of religion in the area. In 1820, at the age of 15 he was troubled by the conflicts he saw between the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches.

In the spring of 1820 Joseph was reading from **James 1:5** when that verse suddenly came alive to him and prompted him to ask God which church he should join. He went into the woods by himself and began to pray. After much praying he was finally answered in a vision:

*When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other – “This is my Beloved Son. Hear Him!”...*

*I was answered that I must join none of them (churches) 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.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His apostles*, p. 59)*

**1<sup>st</sup> Vision Account Discrepancies:**

Below are a few of the discrepancies between what Joseph Smith Jr. himself claims to have seen as written in 1832 and the church’s version recorded in 1838-1839:

	<b>1832 Version</b>	<b>1838-1839 Version</b>
<b>Personages</b>	Smith claimed only a vision of Christ.	Smith claimed a vision of both the Father and the Son.
<b>Seeking God</b>	Bible reading stirred Smith to seek God.	A revival motivated Smith to seek God.
<b>Churches Wrong</b>	Smith already knew all the churches were wrong.	The “two personages” informed Smith the churches were wrong.

**The Birth of the Mormon Church:**

Since Joseph Smith had been told by Jesus that all other churches, creeds, and those who professed them were abominable, the “one true church” was organized on April 6, 1830, by Smith and five others in Fayette, New York. At the founding meeting, Smith received a revelation from God that he was to be “a seer, a translator, a prophet, and an apostle.”

*(History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1:40-42)*

Now we will explore whether the Mormon Church is the restored church.

## **The Mormon Church: The Restored Church?**

According to the official version of Joseph Smith's First Vision account, Joseph went out into the woods to pray and ask God which church he should join. He claimed that two personages appeared to him in dazzling light. One of the personages, the "Beloved Son," told him he shouldn't join any of the churches because they were all wrong, the Christian creeds were abominable, and all those who professed them were corrupt. (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1:17-19)

This has been the belief of prominent Mormon leaders throughout their history as attested to by their own words:

- Brigham Young, the second president of the church said, "The Christian world, so called, are heathens as to their knowledge of the salvation of God." (Brigham Young, *The Journal of Discourses*, 8:171)
- Orson Pratt, a leading Mormon apostle stated, "All other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God: and any person who receives Baptism, or the Lord's Supper from their hands will highly offend God, for he looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people." (Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 255)
- The late apostle Bruce McConkie said, "Mormons... have the only pure and perfect Christianity now on earth. All other systems of religion are false. If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." (Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 603)

## **Does the Bible Say There's Going to Be a Total Apostasy In the Church?**

According to the Mormon Church the answer is "yes". Let's explore whether that's the case by looking at some of the prominent passages used by the Mormon Church to supposedly validate a total apostasy in the church and therefore bring about the need for a restored church.

## **Does the Bible Contain Promises of a Restored Church?**

The Mormon Church teaches that there are multiple verses and passages where God promises a restoration of His church that will go into complete apostasy.

### **Acts 3:20-21**

**20** And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

**21** Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

### **The Mormon Teaching:**

The “restitution of all things,” Mormons say, is actually the restoration of the Gospel, and it is to that which all the prophets looked forward. This restored gospel comes to us via the restoration of the one true church through Joseph Smith. (*Reasoning From the Scriptures with the Mormons*, Ron Rhodes, p. 44)

### **The Biblical Teaching:**

This passage is about the restoration of Israel who has long rejected Jesus as the Messiah, it is not about a restoration of the Gospel. This can be clearly seen by reading the passage in context, which has Peter addressing the “men of Israel” in **Acts 3:12**. There is no hint of a total apostasy in the church.

Consider the following questions from Ron Rhodes book Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons:

### **Ask...**

- Would you please read from **Matthew 16:18**?
- How could Jesus’ words be correct if the entire church would soon go into complete apostasy?
- Would you please read from **Matthew 28:18-20**?
- How long would Jesus remain with His followers?
- How could these words be true if a complete apostasy was to happen?
- Would you please read from **Ephesians 3:21**?
- How could God be glorified in the church “throughout all ages” if the entire church fell into apostasy?
- Would you please read from **Ephesians 4:11-16**?
- Is the church supposed to grow spiritually or degenerate?

### **Acts 20:29-31**

*29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

### **The Mormon Teaching:**

According to the Mormon Church false teachers, “wolves”, were going to come in and ravage the church and not a single sheep would be spared.

### **The Biblical Teaching:**

**Acts 20:17** has Paul speaking specifically to the elders in Ephesus and issues in that specific church, not something that is happening worldwide.

### **Ask...**

- According to **Acts 20:17** who is the apostle Paul speaking to?
- Did you know that the event Paul warned the Ephesian church about in **Acts 20:29-31** actually occurred according to other passages in the Bible (**1 Timothy 1:19; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17; 3:1**)
- Would you please read **Ephesians 3:21**?
- How could the apostle Paul say this if the entire church would soon go into complete apostasy? (Ibid., p. 49)

### **Galatians 1:8**

*8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

### **The Mormon Teaching:**

The Mormon Church teaches that this verse proves a total apostasy due to another gospel being preached.

### **The Biblical Teaching:**

**Galatians 1** says nothing of a total apostasy but is a warning to the churches in Galatia not to accept a Gospel that adds works to their faith as is clearly seen by reading the rest of the book. Interestingly enough the Mormon Church has done just that, which we will explore later.

### **Ask...**

- Did you know that **Galatians 1:8** was dealing with a historical situation in which some Jews had infiltrated the church and taught people they must be circumcised to be saved?
- What was Paul's response to this according to **Galatians 1:6-9**?
- Doesn't presenting a Gospel other than what was already handed down make one accursed? Does the "gospel" of Mormonism go against the Gospel of grace as presented in the New Testament?
- Would you please read **Hebrews 12:28**?
- If God's Kingdom cannot be shaken does this leave any room for a total apostasy of the church?

### **2 Thessalonians 2:3**

*3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

### **The Mormon Teaching:**

Mormon apostle James E. Talmage writes concerning this verse, "In his second epistle to the 'church of the Thessalonians,' Paul declares that the spirit of iniquity was already then operative... predicting the rise of the apostate church, with its blasphemous assumptions of power, as a condition antecedent to the second coming of Christ." (James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, p. 41)

### **The Biblical Teaching:**

Paul is speaking about a specific apostasy headed by a specific "man of sin" (Antichrist), and he says it will take place at a specific time, the second coming of Christ.

### Ask...

- Would you please read **2 Thessalonians 2:1-3**?
- Does the apostasy spoken of here find its resolution in the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ or the establishment of the Mormon Church?
- Did you know that even the Mormon scriptures argue against a total apostasy?
- Did you know that 3 Nephi 28:1-8 makes reference to three faithful Nephite disciples who never died and Doctrine and Covenants 7:1-8 teaches the Apostle John never died?
- If these individuals never died, as the Mormon scriptures teach, how did the entire church go into complete apostasy?

### 1 Timothy 4:1-2

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*

*2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

### The Mormon Teaching:

The Mormon Church teaches that these verses point to the total apostasy of the church. But, once again we must ask if this is what these verses are saying.

### The Biblical Teaching:

Simply reading the passage states that “some shall depart from the faith.” This does not even remotely hint at a total apostasy of the church.

### Ask...

- Would you please read **1 Timothy 4:1**?
- How many does it say will abandon the faith?
- Did you know that the introduction to the *History of the Church* says that “nothing less than a complete apostasy of the Christian religion would warrant the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”?
- Since these passages speak only of a partial apostasy in certain locations, doesn’t this mean that the establishment of the Mormon Church was unnecessary?



**Conclusion:**

There is no Biblical Scripture to indicate a total apostasy in the church, Mormon scripture refutes the idea of a total apostasy, and the foundation of the message of the Mormon Church are all based on false claims. This means that we cannot conclude that the organization of the Mormon Church was ever necessary and must be questioned at every point concerning Scripture and doctrine due to the fact that it's very foundation is flawed.

This now leads to another question, "If the Mormon Church was supposed to be established by Joseph Smith at the command of God, was Joseph Smith listening to the one true God or was he deceived by another spirit?" Let's see if the god of Mormonism is compatible with the God of Scripture.