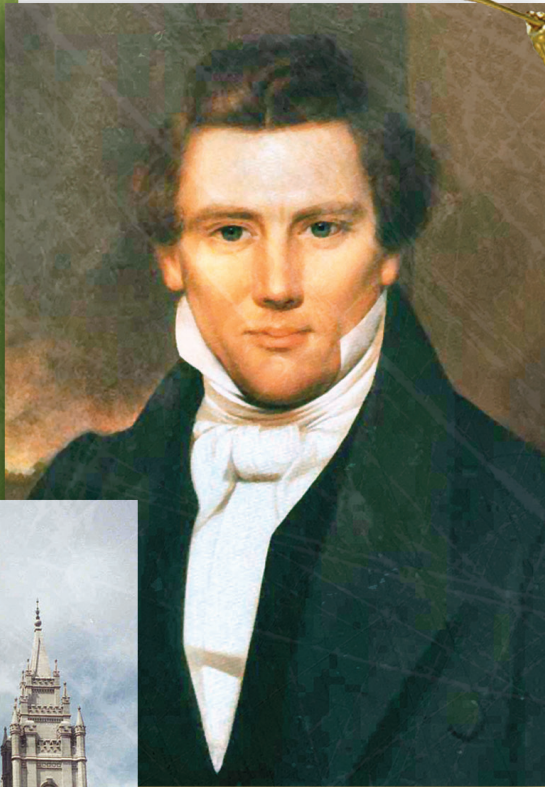


Key Beliefs, Practices, and History

# 10 Questions & Answers on Mormonism



- Was Joseph Smith a True Prophet of God?
- Is the Mormon God the God of the Bible?
- Does Mormonism Teach the Truth About Jesus?
- Why do Mormons Build Temples?

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# 1 Q

## Did the Christian Church Really Need to Be Restored?

### Mormonism Claims...

#### Complete Apostasy

According to Mormon prophets, after the death of Jesus' original apostles, the Christian church gradually slipped into "the Great Apostasy"—a complete and universal abandonment of true Christian principles. Though we do not know exactly when this took place, Christian doctrine became thoroughly corrupted, and the priesthood authority necessary to administer key ordinances like baptism and the Lord's Supper was lost. The importance of believing that the true church was destroyed is underscored by Mormon apostle James Talmage: "If the alleged apostasy of the primitive Church was not a reality, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not the divine institution its name proclaims."<sup>1</sup>

#### Restoration Required

The restoration of true Christianity began when God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to a youth named Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820. In this "First Vision" Jesus told Smith that all the churches were wrong and that all their creeds (statements of belief) were "an abomination."<sup>2</sup> God used Smith to organize His true church again in 1830.

### You Should Also Know...

Though the Latter-day Saints (LDS) church views the many Christian denominations as proof that Christ's "One True Church" was lost, numerous LDS splinter groups exist. The second largest of these groups is the Community of Christ (known originally as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or RLDS). Additionally, numerous "fundamentalist" LDS groups believe that the Utah-based LDS church itself became apostate when it officially renounced polygamy in 1890.

### A: The Bible Teaches...

#### No General Apostasy

Jesus promised His followers that He would be with them in their ministry of making disciples, baptizing, and teaching, "even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). He promised that He would build His church, and that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Such promises would have been broken had Jesus allowed His church to be "destroyed." While the Bible does mention that "some" shall depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1), it never implies that a universal or "complete" apostasy would take place prior to His return. The fact that "some [would] depart" implies that others would not. The New Testament here and elsewhere portrays apostasy as the acts and attitudes of individuals and groups breaking away from the church (see also 1 Jn. 2:19), not as the church ceasing to exist.



Joseph Smith's "First Vision"  
Stained glass window at the Museum of Church  
History and Art in Salt Lake City, Utah

# 2

## Was Joseph Smith a True Prophet of God?

### Mormonism Claims...

#### Uniquely Important

Joseph Smith (1805–1844), the church’s founder and first president, is a modern “prophet, seer, and revelator” (a person who reveals divine truth). He is ranked in importance second only to Jesus Himself when it comes to the salvation of mankind: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”<sup>3</sup> Many believe that the most convincing witness to Joseph’s calling as a prophet is the Book of Mormon, which he called “the most correct of any book on earth.”<sup>4</sup>

#### Genuine or Fraud

According to tenth LDS president Joseph Fielding Smith, “Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground.”<sup>5</sup>

### The Bible Teaches...

#### Testing Prophets

God provided two main tests for Israelites to determine whether a self-proclaimed prophet was legitimate. First, he must represent the true God of the Hebrews; prophets who introduced false gods were to be immediately rejected (Deut. 13:1-3). Second, they were to reject professing prophets who incorrectly foretold the future (Deut. 18:20-22). They were also commanded not to add to or take away from the revelations God had given them (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6).



Joseph Smith receives the Book of Mormon from Moroni  
© Bill McKeever. Used with permission.

### You Should Also Know...

Joseph Smith denied the biblical view of God (see *Question 6*). He falsely predicted that a war between the States would literally become a world war.<sup>6</sup> And although the Bible warns against adding or taking away from what God has commanded, Joseph Smith produced his own version of the Bible in which he took out some parts and inserted others (see *Question 3*).

Mormon leaders have often made incredible statements about the role

and character of Joseph Smith. For example, Mormon prophet Brigham Young and his counselor, George Q. Cannon, both insisted that the only way a Latter-day Saint could hope to enter the highest level of Mormon heaven (the celestial kingdom) was if he had Joseph Smith’s permission.<sup>7</sup> Mormon apostle Bruce McConkie also declared that “all men in the latter days must turn to Joseph Smith to gain salvation,”<sup>8</sup> and that Joseph Smith aided God the Father in the creation of the earth.<sup>9</sup>

# 3

## Q. What Is Mormon Scripture?

### Mormonism Claims...

#### Four “Standard Works”

The LDS church accepts four books as its “standard works”:

- The Bible (King James Version)
- The Book of Mormon—a translation of an ancient document that gives an account of three people groups who migrated to the Americas from the Middle East, the latest of these arriving about 589 BC.
- The Doctrine and Covenants—a collection of modern revelations, most of which were given by LDS church founder Joseph Smith.
- The Pearl of Great Price—a collection of smaller works.

Of these four, only the Bible is considered to have corruptions and is accepted with qualifications (*see Question 4*).

#### Continuing Revelation

Mormons are also instructed to accept the words of their living prophets.

Because of their belief in continuing revelation, Mormons do not view their scriptures as being “closed,” meaning that some doctrines may be changed or added in the future.

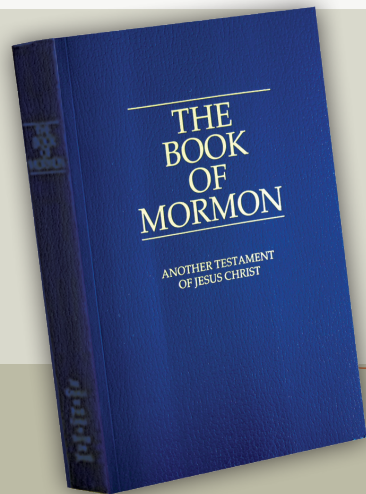
### You Should Also Know...

Doctrine and Covenants 73:4 states that God commanded Joseph Smith to finish a new translation of the Bible. On July 2, 1833, Smith wrote, “We this day finished the translating of the Scriptures....”<sup>11</sup> To call his new Bible a “translation” is very misleading since this Bible, known as the Inspired Version or Joseph Smith Translation (JST), wasn’t really a translation at all. Smith had no ancient manuscripts in his possession, nor was he fluent in any biblical language. Rather than

### A: The Bible Teaches...

#### The Bible vs. Mormon Revelations

The Bible says it’s a serious offense to claim God said something when He actually didn’t. Before Mormon scripture can be given any credibility at all it must agree with what God has *already* revealed in the Bible—for example, see Acts 17:11, Hebrews 1:1-2. (The Mormon church takes no such position. In fact, the church’s First Presidency has insisted that the “most reliable way to measure the accuracy of any biblical passage is not by comparing different texts, but by comparison with the Book of Mormon and modern-day revelations.”)<sup>10</sup>



consult ancient texts, Joseph merely opened his Bible and “corrected” whatever he felt was necessary according to his view at the time (for example, adding a prophecy of his own birth to Gen. 50:33). Though the Mormon church does not publish its own bound version of Smith’s complete Bible, it does include Smith’s alterations in footnotes and endnotes of its edition of the King James Version.