
Mormons

Origins

The Mormon Church, known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith. Born in America in 1805, Smith claimed to have had numerous revelations from various people, including Christ, John the Baptist and three apostles. A claimed outcome of these revelations was that Smith, and a friend called Oliver Cowdery, were given the authority of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods. Smith also claimed to have been spoken to by an angel called Moroni, who told him about a book written on plates of gold. He is said to have eventually recovered these plates, from a place called Cumorah, and translated the texts on the plates. This became known as the Book of Mormon.

The church grew rapidly and, by 1836, the first Mormon temple had been opened. Mormons were persecuted because they were against slavery and advocated plural marriages. To escape persecution many moved to Illinois, where they built the city of Nauvoo. Smith was jailed many times, and in 1844, while awaiting trial for treason and riot, he and his brother were attacked in jail by a mob and killed. Brigham Young became the new leader and he led them further west, eventually settling in the Great Salt Lake Basin in 1847. Here they built Salt Lake City, which remains the headquarters of the church to this day. In 1890 they renounced plural marriages and thus entered mainstream life in America.

Today

There are around 13 million members worldwide in 160 countries. Its continued popularity was typified by the opening of the second Mormon temple in Britain in the town of Chorley in 1998. Mormons have a significant impact on social affairs. For example, in 2008 they supported Proposition 8, a Californian ballot proposition which defined marriage as involving opposite-sex couples only and outlawed same-sex marriages. This support included substantial financial contributions.

What the mainstream says

- Men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
- By the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the gospel.
- The main principles and ordinances of the gospel are: faith in the Christ; repentance; baptism by immersion; laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- 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 its ordinances.
- Gifts include tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, visions and healing.
- The Bible and the Book of Mormon are the word of God.
- God will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.
- There is a literal gathering of Israel and a restoration of the ten tribes, Zion will be built upon the American continent, and Christ will reign personally upon the earth.

(Source: http://www.mormonbeliefs.org/articles_faith)

Suggested initial Scriptural approach

A useful starting point is to establish the close link between Zion and Jerusalem. The prophecy of Micah that "the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (4:2) can provide a basis for showing that Zion relates to the land of Israel and not the American continent. As Brother Ron Abel point out in *Wrested Scriptures*, the assertion concerning Zion is just one of many differences between the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and his book provides a detailed list of these.