



❖ *The Godhead* ❖

The Mormon Jesus Christ

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INTRODUCTION

The first *Article of Faith* contained in the scriptures of *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* says, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."¹ Mormons often cite this affirmation as proof that they are members of authentic Christianity.

What the real question should be, however, what does the Mormon Church believe about Jesus. Who is He? Most Mormons will ardently disagree that they believe in a different Jesus, but what has Church leadership actually said?

Fifteenth Mormon President and Prophet Gordon B. Hinkley explained on more than one occasion that the Mormon Church believes in a different Jesus. One such admission was printed in a Mormon Church owned newspaper, the *Deseret News*, citing a speech made by Hinkley during a trip to Europe:

In bearing testimony of Jesus Christ, President Hinkley spoke of those outside the Church who say Latter-day Saints 'do not believe in the traditional Christ.' 'No, I don't. The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak.'¹²

Hinkley again confirmed this distinction during an address given to LDS faithful on April 7, 2002, during the 172nd Annual General Conference of the Mormon Church. We read the following in the Church owned *Ensign* magazine:

As a Church we have critics, many of them. They say we do not believe in the traditional Christ of Christianity. There is some substance to what they say. Our faith, our knowledge is not based on ancient tradition, the creeds which came of a finite understanding and out of the almost infinite discussions of men trying to arrive at a

1 *Pearl of Great Price*, p. 60

2 Gordon B. Hinkley, *LDS Church News section*, June 20, 1998, p. 7

definition of the risen Christ. Our faith, our knowledge comes of the witness of a prophet in this dispensation...³

In his well respected book, Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie distinguished his Jesus from the fake Christ worshiped by the rest of Christianity:

And virtually all the millions of apostate Christendom have abased themselves before the mythical throne of a mythical Christ.⁴

Mormon Seventy Bernard P. Brockbank denied the traditional Christ as well:

It is true that many of the Christian churches worship a different Jesus Christ than is worshipped by the Mormons or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁵

I remember being confounded as a Mormon when hearing Christians say that Mormonism believed in a false Jesus. After all, how could “anti-Mormons” say that when Latter-day Saints taught about Him, read about Him from the Bible, and prayed in His name? Our official Church title presented the very name of Jesus Christ. Even the *Book of Mormon* contained the subtitle “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” While I knew we believed some different things about Jesus, I still thought that the Christ of Mormonism was in more ways than not, the same Christ worshipped by “apostate” Christianity.

However, once I set out to prove several “anti-Mormon” ministries wrong with regard to their portrayal of LDS beliefs, I found that their quotations were indeed accurate, and the context was fairly presented. I soon began to see some glaring differences and inconsistencies that began to nag my conscience.

The issue is not whether or not Mormonism believes in Christ. The more essential question is, In which Christ does Mormonism believe? The following table shows 29 differences between the Mormon and Christian Jesus Christ. It is my position now, as a Christian, that the differences are many and are irreconcilable with true Christianity.

3 Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign* magazine, May 2002, Vol. 32, No. 5, pp. 90-91

4 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 269

5 Bernard P. Brockbank, "The Living Christ", *Ensign* magazine, May 1977 ed., pp. 26-27

THE JESUS OF MORMONISM		THE JESUS OF CHRISTIANITY
1	A god among many	The one and only true God
2	A created being	Personally uncreated
3	Our literal big brother	Not our big brother
4	Brother of the Devil	Created the Devil
5	Not virgin born	Virgin born
6	A biological son of god	Not a biological Son of God
7	Asked to believe he never sinned	Never sinned because always God
8	A god by achievement	Has always been God
9	Not omnipotent	Is omnipotent
10	Not omniscient	Is omniscient
11	Not immutable	Is immutable
12	Internally inconsistent	Is internally Consistent
13	Creator of Earth with man's help	Created without man's help
14	Born in Jerusalem	Born in Bethlehem
15	A married Jesus	Is not married
16	A practicing polygamist	Is not a polygamist
17	Biological father of mortal children	Has no biological children
18	Atoned for sin by sweating in Gethsemane	Atoned for sin on the cross of calvary
19	One of countless saviors	Only Savior for all people anywhere
20	Three days of crucifixion darkness	Three hours of crucifixion darkness
21	Visited America after his resurrection	Did not go continent hopping
22	Visited Earth multiple times	Will come again in the Second Coming
23	Returning to Missouri	Returning to Jerusalem
24	Does not accept prayers directly	Accepts prayers directly
25	Refuses our worship	Accepts our worship
26	Blood cleanses from some sins	Blood cleanses from all sins
27	Requires works for eternal life	Requires faith for eternal life
28	Didn't save the thief on the cross	Saved the thief on the cross
29	Promises "fire protection" for tithers	Will rapture His children to safety

Distinctive No. 1 — A God among many

The Jesus Christ of Mormonism is but one of three separate Gods forming the LDS Godhead and one of literally innumerable Gods throughout the universe. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

Three separate personages—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—comprise the Godhead. As each of these persons is a God, it is evident, from this standpoint alone, that a plurality of Gods exists....But in addition there is an infinite number of holy personages, drawn from worlds without number, who have passed on to exaltation and are thus gods.⁶

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus is the one self-existent God. While Christ is a separate Personage within the triune Godhead—and is therefore distinct from God the Father or God the Holy Ghost—the true Jesus still remains in essence (or being) the one and only true God. Briefly, this critical point is validated in the Bible through two points of revelation:

1. Christ is God.

Mormonism denies that Christ is *the* God, but affirms that He is *a* God. The Bible, however, refers to Christ numerous times not as *a* God, but simply as “God”.⁷ While it is true that Jesus never explicitly used the three words “I am God,” biblical support for His Deity is nonetheless evident. Let’s look at a few of these examples:

Isaiah 7:14*

...Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call
his name Immanuel.

Christ’s name *Immanuel* literally means “God with us” in Hebrew.⁸ Immanuel is not *a* God, but simply *God with us*. The monotheistic Jewish culture would have accepted this at face value. Jesus inferred His Deity many times, such as when He identified Himself as the very God in the Old Testament who revealed Himself to Moses:

John 8:58*

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

As the “I am,” Jesus in essence said “I am God.” Not “I was with God,” not “I am *a* God,” but He simply proclaimed to be God. Christian scholar Charles C. Ryrie highlighted this fact:

⁶ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., pp. 576-577, italics in the original

⁷ Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23; Jn. 1:1, 14; 5:18; 8:58; 20:28; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8

⁸ Strong’s Concordance, word # 6005

This is more than limited existence before Abraham was born because He said "I am." "I was" might indicate that He existed for several centuries before Abraham, but I am (*eimi*) states eternity.⁹

John 20:28*

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

None of these KJV citations were "corrected" by Joseph Smith's *Inspired* Bible Version. Note that Jesus did not correct Thomas for his choice of words in John 20:28. If Christ was not *the* very God, then He indeed would have been obligated to correct Thomas immediately if He were not to be accused of blasphemy. The Ten Commandments strictly forbid Christians from having any other gods before the one and only true God. If Christ were not *the* God, then Thomas was in violation of worshiping other gods also.

2. There is Only One True God.

The Bible is clear that there is only one true God.¹⁰ If Christ is God, and there's only one God, then the true Christ is the one and only true God. One doctrine of the Christian faith that recognizes the true and full Deity of Christ is known as the *incarnation*.

The Incarnate Christ

The term *incarnation* is a theological term for the one and only God becoming flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. This same Jesus became fully human while still remaining fully God and completely sinless (2 Cor. 5:21).

It is important to note that this term does not mean that God the Father became incarnate in Christ or that the Holy Spirit became incarnate in Christ. This would be inconsistent with Bible revelation since each Person of the Godhead is a distinct member of the triune Godhead. The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit. The Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son. Each are distinct centers of consciousness, each distinct forms of personal existence, yet each are the same indivisible and singularly existent God. As the Bible teaches therefore, it wasn't the Father or Holy Ghost who became man, but God the Son (Jn. 1:1, 14).

While the term *incarnation* is not found in the Bible, the doctrine is plainly supported:

John 1:1, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld the glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

9 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 275

10 Deut. 4:35, 39; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Kings 8:60; 1 Chron. 17:20; Is. 37:20; 43:10; 44:6,8; 45:5-6,14,21-22; 46:9; 48:12; 45:5-6, Jas. 2:19

1 Timothy 3:16*

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Neither of these KJV citations were "corrected" by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired* Bible Version.

"Incarnation" Redefined

While the term is rarely used in Mormonism, the meaning of "incarnate" has nonetheless been redefined to comply with unique LDS teaching. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie gives a short, one paragraph explanation in his book under the title *INCARNATE GOD*:

Christ is the Incarnate God. That is, he is the Lord Omnipotent, a God "from all eternity to all eternity," and yet he came down from heaven and dwelt "in a tabernacle of clay..."¹¹

Thus, in Mormonism it wasn't *the* God, but *a* God that became incarnate. The seemingly innocuous letter "a" in McConkie's definition completely changes the Christian meaning of the incarnation. Since the Bible does not agree with Mormonism's definition of the incarnation, Joseph Smith Jr. also made that problem go away by simply changing what the Bible says in John 1:1, stating that the "gospel was the word" and the "word was with the Son..." Small "w."

* * * LDS Rebuttals * * *

LDS Rebuttal 1: *"If Jesus is the one and only God, then why did He say that the Father was greater than he? How can this describe the same person?"*

John 14:28

...I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

Indeed, Christ referred to His Father numerous times and explained that the doctrines He taught were not His, but those of the Father.¹² Does this really prove that Christ must be a separate, autonomous God from the Heavenly Father? After all, how can one who is lesser than another be the same person?

The first error LDS often make is assuming that Christians believe that God the Father and Jesus are the same Person. This misrepresentation makes the statement of Christ in John 14 appear illogical, and indeed it would be if the Christian position was as LDS often portray it. No one but a schizophrenic or egomaniac would claim that he was greater than himself. But the Jesus of the Christian faith, when properly presented, was not deranged or illogical since He is not the same Person as God the Father. Both Christ and God the Father are two separate Persons of the Godhead, yet still existing as the indivisible and singularly existent God.

11 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 378

12 Matt. 7:21; 10:32; Lk. 22:29; 23:46; Jn. 5:36-37; 8:49; 12:49; 20:17; Eph. 3:15; Jn. 7:16

Therefore, although Christ proclaimed the Father as greater than He, He was not denying His full Deity as the singularly existent God.

Secondly, LDS point to the submission or subordination of Christ in this passage and infer that this equates to a *personal* inferiority. Scripture does not support this however. Since Christ is still the one true God, Jesus is equal to the Father in all things, even though there is clearly subordination between the First and Second Persons of the Godhead. This subordination, however, is a *functional* or *positional* subordination—not an ontological one (Christ's essence, being, or nature).

An example of the positional relationship of Christ with God can be seen in the Christian home. Biblically speaking, the husband has been given the position of leadership in the home and in the church. At the same time this in no way infers that the husband is better in nature than the wife, or that the wife is inferior or lesser than the husband. So is the case with Christ and the Father. There can be no leap of logic made from a submissive Christ to an inferior Christ.¹³

Now as to Christ's functional or positional subordination to the Father, Jesus had two natures during His earthly ministry. He was fully God while at the same time fully man. As such, Jesus was never denying that He was fully God, nor was He confirming that the Father was more powerful, but He was acknowledging His lower position to the Father in His capacity as a man. As a man, Jesus was voluntarily subject to the same laws of God that we are. As a man and our exemplar, Christ was teaching us our similar position with the Father. As a man, when Christ assumed the role of a lowly household servant and washed the feet of His disciples, He in no way affirmed an inferior or lesser position in relation to the disciples. Christ voluntarily performed this function to show us how we were to conduct ourselves both to others and to the Father.

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus—being equal with God the Father—accepted a lower position to carry out His purposes here on earth:

Philippians, Chapter 2
(See also Hebrews 2:9)

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Author Millard J. Erickson explains the significance of the Greek word from which we derive the English word *form*:

The word translated ... "in the form of," is the Greek *morphe*. It is the word that refers to the full set of characteristics which make something that which it is, as contrasted with

13 Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; 3:1-4, 8-12

the word *schēma*, which is the external appearance, or façade, which does not necessarily indicate the true nature of the thing.¹⁴

The *form* of God could be likened to the "DNA" of God, figuratively speaking. The DNA identifies that which is intrinsic and essential to the nature of a person. Your DNA uniquely determines and identifies what and who you are. In like fashion, Christ—being in the form of God—didn't divest Himself of His fully divine nature when He became incarnate, but voluntarily took upon Himself the form of man.

LDS Rebuttal 2: "If Jesus is the one and only God, to whom did He pray?"

Indeed, the Bible recounts several instances in which Christ prayed to the Heavenly Father.¹⁵ This common LDS question infers once again that Christ and God the Father is the same Person. Indeed, if a person prayed to himself and answered, we would call him mentally ill.

If the true position of the Christian Trinity is not misrepresented, however, there is no problem with this LDS characterization since Jesus and the Father are *not* the same Person, but are two separate Persons existing as one Being and one God. Jesus therefore did not pray to Himself and did not answer Himself. Christ was praying to the first Person of the Godhead—the Heavenly Father—just as scripture says.

Why did Jesus need to pray? Author Millard J. Erickson explains in his book:

Taking a physical body involved having a definite physical location, and this meant separation from the Father. Apparently during this time of incarnation, the Son did not have direct access to the consciousness of the Father and the Holy Spirit....It was necessary for him to pray numerous times during his earthly ministry, indicating that he apparently needed to express his thoughts and feelings to the Father.¹⁶

Beyond the practical reason for Christ needing to pray, as the God man and our perfect example of how to live, Jesus showed us that He needed to pray to His Father. When Christ took Peter, James, and John with Him to a secluded spot for prayer (John 9:28), they no doubt left that experience having a greater appreciation for what prayer was all about.

LDS Rebuttal 3: "If Jesus is the one and only God, how could He say that He did not know the day or hour of His return?"

Matthew 24:36

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Remembering again that Christ was one Person with two natures, this apparent contradiction is answerable. In regard to His human nature, Jesus did not have all knowledge. Thus, in His

14 Millard J. Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, p. 20

15 Matt. 26:36-42; Lk. 6:12; 9:28

16 Millard J. Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, p. 60

human nature He really did not know the day or hour of His return. But in His divine nature, Jesus has all knowledge since He is God. Hence in His divine nature Jesus does know when He will return and that arriving day will not catch Him by surprise.

* * * LDS Scripture Contradictions * * *

Ironically, some extra-biblical Mormon scripture contradicts LDS teaching that Christ is only a God among many. The *Book of Mormon* is said by Joseph Smith Jr. to be “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion.”¹⁷ According to Mormonism the “fullness [or completeness] of the gospel” is found between the *Book of Mormon* and the Bible.¹⁸ We should therefore find clear doctrine that corrects and clarifies what Mormonism says the Bible really means. Does the *Book of Mormon* therefore allow Christ to be only a God among many?

Book of Mormon, Alma 11:7

For if there be no Christ there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a god, and he is Christ. . . .

It is unfortunate that the most correct book on earth has failed to clarify what Mormonism says the Bible really means. Consider yet another *Book of Mormon* contradiction:

Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 11:17

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.

LDS reader, can Mormonism really say that Christ is the Most High God when he's one of countless Gods? LDS often come back against Bible verses, stating that these statements are only referring to this world. Neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon actually says that, however. That should be concerning to you, shouldn't it?

A Mormon Doctrinal Conundrum—How did the Mormon Jesus Become a God *Before* Receiving a Physical Body?

Mormonism teaches that Jesus became a God *before* being born on earth. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie said:

As far as man is concerned, all things center in Christ. He is the Firstborn of the Father. By obedience and devotion to the truth he attained that pinnacle of intelligence which ranked him as a God, as the Lord Omnipotent, while yet in his pre-existent state.¹⁹

Mormon Apostle Mark E. Peterson confirmed this unique occurrence:

Christ attained Godhood in His preexistence, long before His birth into mortality.²⁰

17 *Book of Mormon*, Introduction

18 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 42:12

19 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd. ed., p. 129

20 Mark E. Petersen, *This is Life Eternal*, p. 29

The problem often overlooked by Latter-day Saints is that this teaching contradicts another fundamental LDS doctrine known as *Eternal Progression*, which is the process of learning, testing, and advancement by which Mormons hope to achieve godhood themselves someday. Part of this advancement period must be performed on an earth-like planet where the presence of good and evil is present, which allows the Heavenly Father's children the opportunity to choose right over wrong and demonstrate their obedience to Him.

The conundrum Latter-day Saints find themselves in is that if their Jesus obtained personal Godhood in heaven *before* coming to earth to be our Savior, then their Christ bypassed a necessary step in the plan of Eternal Progression—that of being born and tested somewhere on an earth-like planet like ours. The flaws in this kingpin LDS doctrine are seen on three points:

1. The Mormon Heavenly Father needed an earthly testing period himself.

Mormonism teaches that God the Father had to follow the plan of Eternal Progression Himself through a period of earthly testing before obtaining Godhood status. Mormon Seventy Milton R. Hunter explained in his official Mormon Church sponsored book, *The Gospel through the Ages*:

The holy scriptures give an account of a great council which was held in the spirit world before man was placed on the earth....The principal purposes of the great gathering were to consider carefully the problem of the eternal progression of man...The law of growth or progression is one of the eternal laws of life. All other laws contribute to it. Our Eternal Father has attained His position of exaltation and Godhood by obedience to the great law of progression.²¹

Mormon prophets have continuously taught the sublime truth that God the Eternal Father was once a mortal man who passed through a school of earth life similar to that through which we are now passing. He became God—an exalted being—through obedience to the same eternal Gospel truths that we are given opportunity today to obey.²²

Since the Mormon Heavenly Father had to follow the law of Eternal Progression, is it really logical to think that the Mormon Jesus did something his Heavenly Father could not do?

2. The Law of Eternal Progression is a fixed law.

Lest some LDS rectify the Eternal Progression problem by concluding that the Heavenly Father modified His law, it should be noted that the Mormon Heavenly Father *cannot* change the law and it is therefore not modifiable for spirit children who exhibit exemplary behavior in a pre-existence estate (i.e. the Mormon Christ).

As Mormon Seventy Milton R. Hunter explained, all the Mormon Heavenly Father could do with such laws was to become “acquainted with” and apply them, thus claiming them as His own.

21 Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages*, p. 12

22 Ibid., p. 104

The law of Eternal Progression on an earthly estate is listed as one of these eternally existent and fixed laws:

Anything which has an end must of necessity have a beginning; therefore, truth had no beginning. It has always existed and it shall continue to exist eternally. Wherever there have been intelligences (i.e., the ego or life of men) in any world and at any stage of progression, such fundamental principles as good, evil...choice (agency), will, faith...progression, and hundreds of similar verities have existed. They constitute the laws of God—the laws of eternal truth. Our Heavenly Parents have through aeons of time and a multitude of experiences gradually become acquainted with and applied in Their lives an untold number of these everlasting laws. As They learned these verities and how to operate them, these laws thereby became subject unto Elohim and henceforth were His laws—or, in other words, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.²³

The plan proposed by God for the government of men and women in their earthly career was "based upon eternal laws that always have been and always will be operative."²⁴

Notice that these eternal laws that God had to learn to operate are presented to man in their “earthly career,” not a pre-existent estate in Heaven. No one is exempt. Wherever there is life (intelligences) “in any world,” Eternal Progression must be followed.

3. Free will (Free Agency) must be available for eternal progression.

In Mormonism, one has to prove or demonstrate his worthiness and obedience to God in order to earn his exaltation to the ranks of Deity. An essential component of this testing is being introduced to an environment of sin where one’s own free will (or “free agency” in LDS language) can be tested through choices of right and wrong. Since Heaven is without sin, an earthly estate is the only way in which one’s metal can be tested as worthy to gain eventual Godhood.

The Mormon Church manual, *Gospel Principles*, explains how all must receive physical bodies on earth and be tested prior to becoming a God:

Our heavenly parents provided us with a celestial home more glorious and beautiful than any place on earth. We were happy there. Yet they knew we could not progress beyond a certain point unless we left them for a time. They wanted us to develop the godlike qualities that they have. To do this, we needed to leave our celestial home to be tested and to gain experience. We needed to choose good over evil. Our spirits needed to be clothed with physical bodies. We would need to leave our physical bodies at death and reunite with them in the Resurrection. Then we would receive immortal bodies like those of our heavenly parents. If we passed our tests, we would receive the fullness of joy that our heavenly parents have received...²⁵

Continuing under the title of "Our Heavenly Father Presented a Plan for Us to Become like Him," we read:

23 Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages*, p. 4

24 Ibid., p. 13

25 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, pp. 13-14

Since we could not progress further in heaven, our Heavenly Father called a Grand Council to present his plan for our progression...We learned that if we followed his plan, we would become like him.²⁶

As a supporting principle of Eternal Progression, Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie affirmed that the law of choice ("free agency") is one of those eternal laws that have always existed and is therefore not subject to manipulation by God the Father:

Agency is the ability and freedom to choose good or evil. It is an eternal principle which has existed with God from all eternity.²⁷

McConkie doesn't mean here that God created and defined the concept of free agency. Free agency did not originate "from God," but was found "with God." To be more specific, the eternal principle of free agency was actually existent *before* the Mormon God ever became a personal being. Once the Mormon God learned this eternal Mormon principle and how to "operate it," then it was applied to His Children. The Mormon God cannot change or modify this eternal law any more than any other eternally existent law.

With this in mind, the essential ingredient of free agency was not available if the Christ of Mormonism obtained Godhood while yet in a pre-existent estate without going through a time of testing on an earth planet.

Remember that Hunter mentioned other supportive eternally existent laws to the law of Eternal Progression, such as "good, evil, will, and faith."²⁸ None of these other supporting laws and opportunities would have been available for a Mormon Christ who bypassed an earthly estate to Godhood. There is no evil in Heaven and therefore no choice to make. There is no faith in Heaven, for all can see and live with the God they serve.

While the Bible records that Satan and one third of the angels rebelled against God and were cast out from heaven, this *does not* demonstrate that free agency is an option in heaven. They were kicked out precisely because one cannot choose sin or wrong in heaven. Any pre-existent Mormon child (or the Mormon Christ for that matter) would meet the same fate if they chose wrong in heaven.

In summary, the Mormon Heavenly Father didn't make the eternal *Law of Progression*—it was in effect before He became a God and has always been operative for all Gods before Him. He Himself had to follow it and no matter how smart or obedient His firstborn Mormon Jesus was, the Mormon Father could not have circumvented the fundamental and eternal principle of progression on an earthly estate.

26 Ibid., p. 14

27 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 26

28 Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages*, p. 4

If Mormon leadership is to be believed—and if LDS scripture is true—then clearly something is wrong with LDS doctrine since Latter-day Saints cannot explain how the Mormon Christ achieved Godhood in a manner that was counter to settled law throughout the ages. Objective students of Mormonism have one of two choices to make:

A. If the LDS account of Jesus is true:

Then the Mormon law of *Eternal Progression* is untrue. The Mormon Jesus *did not* need an earthly testing and trial period before obtaining Godhood. Why then should we? Clearly an earth existence isn't necessary to learn and have one's worthiness tested. Why couldn't the Father have spared the life of Christ by allowing us to stay in the Mormon pre-existence until we too obtained Godhood?

B. If the LDS doctrine of *Eternal Progression* is true:

Then the Mormon Jesus *could not* really have been God when He came to earth to redeem us from our sins. Just like us, the Mormon Jesus should have required a testing period on an earthly planet prior to being found worthy for exaltation to Godhood. But of course, the Mormon Jesus had to somehow be a God when He came to earth since if He had not been God, then He could not have been the sinless sacrifice needed to atone for our sins.

Lastly, the significance of this doctrinal issue cannot be overemphasized, for the Mormon plan of Eternal Progression is the primal and fundamental purpose for why we are here and is the crowning work of the Mormon Heavenly Father—that of making us like Him. If the law of Eternal Progression crumbles under its own weight, so then goes the Mormon gospel. This is an issue that every Latter-day Saint must resolve.

Distinctive No. 2 — The Mormon Jesus is a created being

Reading LDS scripture, a person might get the idea that the Christ of Mormonism has always existed co-eternally and uncreated with God the Father.

Book of Mormon, Mosiah 3:5

For behold...the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven...and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay...

Doctrine and Covenants 39:1
(See also D&C 61:1; 93:21)

Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I AM, even Jesus Christ.

Despite these seemingly orthodox citations from two books of LDS scripture, no Mormon believes that Christ has personally co-existed eternally with the Father. Official Mormon teaching material explains that Jesus was created or brought into being by the Heavenly Father:

The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ...²⁹

Speaking of the creator God, Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie affirmed that:

All men, Christ included, were born as his children in pre-existence.³⁰

Biblical Position

The Jesus of the Christian faith is the uncaused, uncreated, eternally existent God. True Christian doctrine rejects any idea that Christ could have had a personal beginning or was ever created.

“In the Beginning”

The Bible affirms that Christ was in the beginning and therefore could not have been created:

John, Chapter 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God.

A Mormon pre-mortal spirit life is not the “beginning.” A spirit offspring from a Father God who has existed longer than Christ is not the “beginning.” That which is caused by a creator is not in the “beginning.”

Revelation 1:8

(See also Revelation 22:12)

I [Jesus] am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, said the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Each of these phrases intimates an existence not fixed by time. Pick any time in the past—Christ “was.” The eternal and uncreated nature of Christ is why He said of Himself, “Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn. 8:58). Not “I was,” but “I am.” For a Being in which time has no personal relevance, a simple “I Am” works through the ages.

Certainly, there are *beginnings* in the Bible that mark specific events in time—this earth and physical creation being one. When we speak of a *beginning* today, we naturally assume a specific start point in time wherein something was or came to be. We must be cautious, however, not to read this same conceptual “baggage” into scripture when describing immortal beings. For the immortal and eternally existent Christ of the Bible, “in the beginning” is a metaphor for describing an infinite and eternal past—not a point in time.

29 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, 1997 ed., p. 11

30 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 278

Additionally, Christ could not have had a beginning when we consult the whole context of Bible revelation:

1. Christ has existed as long as God has.

The Christian God the Father has existed "from everlasting."³¹ If Christ was therefore "in the beginning" with God, then Christ has existed "from everlasting" as well. If Christ has always existed from everlasting then there has never been a time for Christ to have been created. Honoring the whole context of the Bible then, Christ's existence "in the beginning" is simply allegorical language to convey the idea that He has always existed. LDS should note that none of the KJV citations above were "corrected" by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired* Bible Version.

2. Christ is the Creator of all Things.

The Bible is clear that Christ is not created, but is Himself the Creator of all things. If Christ is the creator of all things, then He Himself cannot be a created Being:

John 1:3*

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Colossians, Chapter 1*

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Neither of these KJV citations were "corrected" by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired* Bible Version.

* * * LDS Scripture Contradictions * * *

Extra-biblical Mormon scripture contradicts LDS doctrine that Jesus was created or brought into being by the Father:

Book of Mormon, Helaman 14:12

...Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning...

Book of Mormon, Ether 4:7

...Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are.

³¹ Ps. 63:16; 41:13; 90:2; 93:2; 103:17; 106:48

Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 9:15

Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning...

Doctrine and Covenants 93:21

And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn;

Clearly, multiple Mormon passages of scripture defeat the idea that Christ could ever have been created by anyone else. If LDS would apply the same standard they level against the Bible, they would admit that LDS scripture fails to say what the Bible supposedly should say before it was corrupted.

* * * **LDS Rebuttals** * * *

LDS Rebuttal: *"We too believe that Christ 'was in the beginning with the Father.' Although Christ was created (born) by the Father, He still dwelt with the Father in the preexistence. Prior to this, Christ existed eternally with the Father as an intelligence."*

Let's unpack this typical semantic subterfuge shall we? How can Mormonism teach a created Christ Who has at the same time existed eternally from the beginning? It depends on what your definition of "beginning" is. Admittedly the Greek word *archē* from which we get our English word *beginning* has several applications such as an "order, time, place or rank".³² The LDS worldview sees *beginning* in the Bible as merely a relative place or order along a moving event timeline. Because of this, the Mormon Christ can be personally created, yet still existent "in the beginning." Let's address two Mormon applications of this term from the LDS rebuttal just given:

1. A Preexistent "Beginning."

This idea has been articulated by one Mormon Apostle who said that "in the beginning" means simply "that all the spirit offspring of the Father [Christ included] were with him in a pre-existence."³³ The event timeline then is set to a specific point, rather than from eternity. From this standpoint the Mormon Christ can be personally created, yet said to be existent from the beginning. Prior to this pre-existent first estate in Mormonism, Christ did not exist as an intelligent, personal being.

The fact is, however, that neither the Bible nor extra-Biblical Mormon scriptures cited present a context defining the beginning as a pre-existent first estate for God's spirit children. This unique LDS meaning is read into these citations without exegetical support. Christ is simply and clearly presented in scripture as "in the beginning."

32 Strong's Concordance, word #746

33 Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., pp. 76-77

2. A *Spirit Intelligence* “Beginning.”

According to Mormonism, prior to Christ’s personal presence with the Father in a pre-existence, He was with the Father (and us) as eternal spirit matter called *intelligence* that has always existed. This *intelligence* is the “*primal element from which the spirit offspring were created...*” since the Mormon Father cannot create anything from nothing.³⁴ In this respect, the Mormon Christ is thought to be personally created, yet existent from the beginning.

It is important to note, however, that this eternal intelligence does not become personal, living, intelligent entity until it is created (or born) by God as spirit babies. As such, while the spiritual “elements” of the Mormon Christ have always existed, He personally has not existed eternally. At some point in time after the Mormon Heavenly Father came into being, the Mormon Christ was brought into being.

Once again, the LDS scriptures cited in this section say “I was” in the beginning. Mormon spirit “intelligence” is not a living, conscious, personal being that could be described by a personal pronoun. Intelligence is an “it”—the raw materials needed to create a Mormon spirit.

No matter how many unique states of being Latter-day Saints attribute to their Christ, a Jesus who has existed from all eternity as God could not be a created Christ. Surely the Mormon Christ—like the created Christ of Jehovah’s Witnesses and other false religions—is not the Christ of the Christian faith.

Distinctive No. 3 — The Mormon Jesus is our literal big brother

Because the Mormon Jesus is a created being, He shares a unique position with mankind in Mormon theology. Since Mormonism believes that every person ever born on earth first existed as a created spirit child of God in Heaven, Jesus and mankind are literal brothers and sisters of God the Father. The Mormon Jesus is unique from us in that He is the first of God’s children.³⁵ An official Mormon study manual affirms our common kinship with Christ:

Every person who was ever born on earth was our spirit brother or sister in heaven. The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ (see D&C 93:21), so he is literally our elder brother...³⁶

Mormon Seventy Milton R. Hunter taught in his book, published by the Mormon Church:

34 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 387

35 Second Mormon President and Prophet Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 26; Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 214;

36 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 11

Jesus is man's spiritual brother. We dwelt with Him in the spirit world...when we became children of God, Jesus was the "first-born," and so He is our eldest brother.³⁷

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus is not our literal brother. Once again, if Christ is God, and if He created all things, then He *cannot* be our literal brother. Christ is the Creator; Mankind is the creature. Intentionally or not, making Christ the sibling brother of mankind unavoidably robs Him of some of His Deity and brings Christ down to man's level.

Yes, Jesus became a man to die and pay for our sins, but as our Creator, He cannot be reduced to the same species and race as man. Christ the God-man is preeminent above all of His creation. We share no common bloodline with Christ, the "Son of David." We share no common genealogical family tree with Christ, the "Root of Jesse." This same Christ man was not cut from the same spiritual mold as we, but He "*made himself of no reputation...and was made in the likeness of men...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death....Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name*" (Phil. 2:7-9). The very God of the ages condescended toward our helpless state and redeemed His handiwork so that His creation could dwell with Him some day in mansions eternal.

When the saved in Christ someday see Jesus in glory, we will not worship our sibling "big brother" who took away our sins, but we'll serve the preeminent, transcendent, one of a kind Creator God who redeemed His handiwork to live with Him forever as sons and daughters of God.

Distinctive No. 4 — The Mormon Jesus is a brother of the Devil

In Mormonism, Christ is the literal sibling brother of Lucifer himself.³⁸ An official Mormon study guide says:

We needed a Savior to pay for our sins and teach us how to return to our Heavenly Father....Two of our brothers offered to help. Our oldest brother, Jesus Christ...said, "Here am I, send me"....Satan...also came, saying, "Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son...³⁹

No matter how evil and despised Satan is today to Latter-day Saints, at a base level, both the "son of the morning" (Satan) and the Mormon Son of God (Jesus) are equal in their origin. Both are literal sons of God, and both were at one time equal in every way until Satan went bad.

37 Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages*, p. 21

38 Twelfth Mormon President and Prophet Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 32-33

39 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, pp. 17-18

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus created the Devil. The Bible is clear that the Father's Only Begotten Son has created all things (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-17). If words are to have meaning, and "all things" means all things, then Christ and Lucifer could never have been sibling brothers at the feet of a Heavenly Father. But beyond this fact, the Bible further discredits any idea of a sibling relationship between Christ and Satan considering:

1. Christ is the *Only* Begotten Son of God.

If the true God has only one begotten Son, then He cannot have another son named Lucifer.

2. Angels are an entirely different being than God.

There are three categories of personal beings identified in scripture: (a) God, (b) Mankind, and (c) Angels. Each of these categories of beings are altogether different in kind and share no common ancestry or origin. As such, Christ (as God the Son) and a fallen angel cannot share a common identity and cannot be the literal sexual offspring of God the Father. Sexual reproduction produces like kind.

Distinctive No. 5 — The Mormon Jesus is not virgin born

Reading Mormon scripture, one might get the impression that the Holy Ghost caused Mary to become pregnant with the Christ child and that Mary therefore remained a virgin from her conception to the birth of Jesus:

Book of Mormon, Alma 7:10

And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.

This seemingly orthodox statement, however, does not really mean to Mormons what it appears to say to Christians. An investigator would have to consult LDS commentaries and wade through volumes of statements made by LDS church authorities to know that Alma 7:10 means just the opposite of what it says. Take for example tenth President and Prophet Mormon Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith:

They tell us the Book of Mormon states that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Ghost. I challenge that statement. The Book of Mormon teaches no such thing! Neither does the Bible.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p.19

LDS also have the historical wisdom of the second Mormon Prophet, Brigham Young, who explained that a literal virgin birth would be dangerous for females:

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 is the Father?...Now remember from this time forth, and forever, that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. I will repeat a little anecdote. I was in conversation with a certain learned professor upon this subject, when I replied, to this idea--"if the Son was begotten by the Holy Ghost, it would be very dangerous to baptize and confirm females, and give the Holy Ghost to them, lest he should beget children, to be palmed upon the Elders by the people, bringing the Elders into great difficulties."⁴¹

LDS should feel privileged to have the insight of modern-day prophets such as Brigham Young. Without his wisdom of setting it straight to learned professors, we would be imperiling every woman with instant pregnancy after baptism, if Christ were truly begotten by the Holy Ghost, just as the Bible says.

Was Brigham just sharing his personal opinion? Was he just simply wrong and LDS should dismiss his counsel? Let's see:

What man or woman on the earth, what spirit in the world can say truthfully that I ever gave a wrong word of counsel, a word of advice that could not be sanctioned by the heavens?⁴²

I would to God that the Latter-day Saints would take the word of Brigham Young to be law! I will defy the inhabitants of the whole earth to tell one word that he ever counseled that was wrong...⁴³

Do just as brother Brigham tells you; for he always tells you what is right...and if there is anything wrong, he will correct it and give you the truth....⁴⁴

So, does Mormonism believe in the virgin birth or not? The official Mormon Church position is yes. In practical terms, however, the only reasonable conclusion is no.

As was demonstrated on the series on the Mormon Heavenly Father, early LDS authorities have described not just a natural and common birth or delivery process for Christ, but also a natural and physical conception process as well. Official Mormon oracles described the "natural action," of their flesh and bones God, the common "laws of generation," the "natural occurrence" of Christ's conception, and the "literal parenthood" of God the Father Who "sired" baby Jesus. They emphasized that there was "nothing figurative" about the Fatherhood of God and that "there is no other process of creation in heaven or on the earth" other than the natural action of conception and birth.

41 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, pp. 51-52, April 9, 1852

42 Ibid., Vol. 12, p. 127

43 Ibid., Vol. 14, p. 226

44 Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 5, p. 218

These statements illustrating a physical union between God and Mary were proclaimed by no less authorities than Presidents and Prophets Brigham Young, Joseph Fielding Smith, Ezra Taft Benson, and Apostles Bruce R. McConkie, Orson Pratt, and Mormon Seventy Milton R. Hunter.

This is hard medicine for many Latter-day Saints to accept and may be why many rank and file LDS today reject the idea of a physical union between God and Mary. However, the opinion of average LDS church membership does not overrule or invalidate comments by Mormon leadership. While most current Mormon leadership is much more general and evasive on this matter today, most do not categorically reject the possibility of a sexual union between their God and Mary. To do so would put the validity of past prophets in question.

It is not my intent to be sensationalistic or to unnecessarily offend LDS readers, but this issue must be addressed and there is just no other way to tackle this topic other than directly. This issue is not incidental, but is of great significance because whether Christ was virgin born or not determines the efficacy and sufficiency of His atonement for our sins. A Christ who was not truly virgin born is a Christ who cannot save.

A Virgin after Physical Relations?

The obvious question at this point is how Mormons can say Christ was born of a virgin when leaders have consistently described an act common to the reproductive process? Like many things in Mormonism, the solution was obtained through a redefinition of the word "virgin." Mormonism believes that Christ can still be virgin born since Mary did not have sexual relations with a mortal man, but with a flesh and bone *immortal* man, the Mormon Heavenly Father. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie said:

For our present purposes, suffice it to say that our Lord was born of a virgin, which is fitting and proper, and also natural, since the Father of the child was an immortal Being.⁴⁵

This comment by McConkie is unfortunately characteristic of the length to which Mormonism will go in an effort to appear orthodox. Not only does Mormonism re-label theological terms, but also many common every-day words of the English language.

Webster's defines a virgin as "a girl or woman who has never had sexual intercourse."⁴⁶ Even Mary understood this almost two millennia ago without any grade school sex-ed classes, as she questioned the angel about how she could conceive "seeing I know not a man" (Lk. 1:31-34). Exactly how McConkie can credibly argue that a women can remain a virgin when Mormonism describes a process that invalidates the word's meaning reveals an incredible aptitude to do violence to the English language in an effort to make a doctrine appear to be that which it is not.

45 Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 466

46 Webster's *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, Gramercy Books New York, 1996, p. 1595

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus was truly virgin born. At best, Mormonism can accurately say that the Mormon Jesus was conceived (but not born from) a virgin. The context of the Bible is not so limited in context. This miracle was accomplished because the Holy Ghost was the sole agent of conception—not a flesh and bones Father God:

Matthew 1:18*

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on the wise...his mother Mary...was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Note again that Mary remained a virgin *after* the conception and while with the Christ child:

Matthew 1:23*

Behold, A Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Neither of these KJV citations were "corrected" by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired Bible Version*. The only way a woman can remain a virgin while yet with child is for no physical union to have occurred with a man. The Holy Ghost—a Personage of spirit—made this event possible. The conception of Christ was therefore truly a miracle. Women do not normally spontaneously conceive.

How different this is to the conception of the Mormon Jesus, which though unusual, was not truly a miracle. The Mormon Mary conceived naturally in the same way every other woman has, through a physical union between a man and woman. Once that initial holy rendezvous occurred between the Mormon Father God and Mary, the title "virgin" was no longer appropriate.

When as a Mormon I began to investigate objectively claims by non-Mormon "critics," I could no longer justify contorted definitions of what "virginity" meant by McConkie and others. Such official LDS explanations began to take on a new face for what most dispassionate observers would see them as—double-speak using verbal gymnastics to justify biblical heresy.

Forty-six Chromosomes

Why is the virgin birth of Christ an essential issue? Even if the true God had a body of flesh and bones, why is it a grave error to believe that it would have been acceptable for God to have had a physical relationship with Mary to sire the baby Jesus?

When explaining the human nature of the Mormon Christ, one Mormon author made a point that reveals to Christians why the LDS doctrine on the virgin birth is seriously flawed. Mormon scholar Stephen E. Robinson, in his book co-authored with a Christian theologian⁴⁷ said:

If Jesus was truly a human being, then he had forty-six chromosomes, a double strand of twenty-three. If he was truly human, he got one strand of twenty-three chromosomes from his mother. Where did the other strand come from, if not from his Father?⁴⁸

As fully God while also being fully man, Christ's body no doubt had 46 chromosomes. But where did they come from? Robinson speaks of something that is not explicitly revealed in scripture. As a general rule it is usually not only unhelpful but potentially heretical to speculate about things not clearly revealed in God's Word. However, it is the opinion of this author that through consulting the context of the whole Bible, it becomes evident that the DNA for the body of Christ was *created* by God and *could not* have been a shared contribution between God and Mary. Consider the following:

1. A literal contribution of DNA by God is impossible.

The simple fact of the matter is that the true Father God of the Christian faith has no personal bodily DNA or chromosomes to contribute. This is obvious to Christians, but is a point lost to many Latter-day Saints who hold a thought process held captive to the Mormon worldview that God the Father has a tangible body of flesh and bones and thus had to share His genes with Mary. When we consider that the Bible reveals a God of Spirit (Jn. 4:24), any contribution of chromosomes by God is physically impossible. This is why the Bible plainly says that Mary was "found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1:18). Her conception was nothing less than a miracle.

2. Mary's DNA was unnecessary.

We know from the Bible that donor DNA is not always necessary to make a man. The inference that Christ's body had to share 23 chromosomes from Mary and 23 chromosomes from God falls apart when we ask the simple question, where did Adam get his chromosomes?

As Creator, God is clearly able to make man and the physical body without sharing chromosomes with anyone. He can make 46 chromosomes programmed to His liking. Tracing our genealogical heritage back to the first man, we are all here from DNA that ultimately was *made* by God, not shared between parents.

47 Mormon author Stephen E. Robinson does not hold the position of Seventy or above in the LDS hierarchy. However, his book has received good reviews by LDS and his views would not be disputed by the rank and file Mormon.

48 Co-authors Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?*, p. 139.

3. Mary's DNA would be unacceptable.

This single point is the most serious flaw in the LDS virgin birth doctrine. For purposes of illustration, we'll assume that the Mormon God physically inseminated Mary. If Christ truly inherited 23 chromosomes from His earthly mother Mary, then He also would have inherited the sinful, Adamic nature of man through the bloodline of Mary. Referring to Adam, the Bible plainly says:

Romans, Chapter 5

Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:12, 19)

Mormonism teaches that "*men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.*"⁴⁹ While this is technically true, because the original sin of our parents has been passed on to every generation through the sinful bloodline of Adam, we are practically responsible for our own sin, but ultimately accountable because of Adam and Eve's sin. The weak view of sin held by Mormonism misses the fact that because mankind inherits a sin nature, sin is not just wrongdoing, but *wrong being*.

Psalm 50:21

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

With this important principle in mind, a Christ born from a physical chromosomal contribution from the Adamic bloodline of Mary would have been a Christ born with a sinful nature and therefore not qualified to atone for our sins. Had an egg from Mary been used, her sinful bloodline would have tainted the bloodline of Jesus. The God of the Christian faith worked around this impasse by providing a sinless God man with a pure and uncontaminated bloodline—a bloodline necessarily different from that of His earthly and sinful Mother.

The baby carried in a mother's womb has its own independent circulatory system. The Mother's blood does not pass through the placenta into the baby's blood. The only way Christ could be born the sinless lamb for our sins was for God to bypass the ordinary method of conception and conceive Jesus from a virgin with the genetics made by God and God alone.

The absolute necessity for a pure and sinless sacrifice was foreshadowed through types (examples) in the Old Testament, where only perfect animals without blemish or defect could be offered as the annual sacrifice for sin in the temple. These perfect and untainted animals were types of the forthcoming virgin-born Christ who would make a more perfect, sinless, and permanent sacrifice for all through His sinless life.

49 *Pearl of Great Price*, 2nd Article of Faith, p. 60

***** LDS Rebuttals *****

How can LDS read the same Bible accounts of the virgin birth as Christians do, affirming that they believe what it says but extracting a very different meaning? The conception account in Luke is sometimes used by LDS to show that the Heavenly Father conceived Jesus rather than the Holy Ghost:

Luke 1:35

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

LDS Rebuttal 1: *"Note that two personages of the Godhead were involved in the conception of Mary. The "Holy Ghost," and the "Highest," which must be the Father since He is preeminent over the Son and the Holy Ghost.*

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt made this distinction in a statement made in October 1853:

The angel said unto the Virgin Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." ...It seems from this relation that the Holy Ghost accompanied "the Highest" when He overshadowed the Virgin Mary and begat Jesus; and from this circumstance some have supposed that the body of Jesus was begotten of the Holy Ghost without the instrumentality of the immediate presence of the Father. There is no doubt that the Holy Ghost came upon Mary to sanctify her, and make her holy, and prepare her to endure the glorious presence of "the Highest," that when "He" should "overshadow" her she might conceive, being filled with the Holy Ghost; hence the angel said, as recorded in Matthew, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost;" that is, the Holy Ghost gave her strength to abide the presence of the Father without being consumed; but it was the personage of the Father who begat the body of Jesus...⁵⁰

According to Pratt then, the Holy Ghost was on the scene, but He didn't cause Mary to conceive. He was in a supportive role only. Since we know elsewhere from scripture that no man can see God and live (Ex. 33:20), the Holy Ghost of Mormonism merely prevented Mary's hair from catching on fire and her body from being reduced to a pile of carbon charcoal, while the flesh and bones Father God of Mormonism enjoined a mortal for purposes of impregnation.

While LDS may attempt to split the "Holy Ghost" and the "Highest" in this passage into two separate beings, such interpolative method reveals an LDS thought process held captive by a Godhead consisting of three separate Gods. Note, however, that the only Person of the Godhead specifically said to have shown up was the *Holy Ghost*, not a flesh and bones Heavenly Father. A careful look at the descriptors used in this account ("power" and

50 Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, Vol.1, No.10, p.158

“overshadow”) conveys characteristics and actions of a non-tangible Being, not a flesh and bones God.

LDS Rebuttal 2: *“How could Christ refer to His ‘Father’ if the Holy Ghost was responsible for His conception?”*

To Bible believer’s, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one co-equal God. As such, the Holy Ghost can be the “Highest” and the Christ child can be of the Holy Ghost, while also being the Son of the Father. Trying to split up Luke 1:35 into more than one Deity is biblically unsupportable. This rebuttal would not be an issue if Mormonism accepted the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Many LDS are closed-minded to non-LDS attempts to illustrate the obvious since other “believers” are considered apostate and Mormon authorities considered infallible when speaking for God. So, with this in mind, let’s hear from a Mormon Apostle as he describes why a correct view of the virgin birth is essential:

Modernistic teachings denying the virgin birth are utterly and completely apostate and false.⁵¹

Of course, McConkie considers this characterization applicable only to non-Mormons. If, however, inquiring Latter-day Saints will objectively consider that Mormonism’s denial of a Holy Ghost conception is synonymous with denial of the virgin birth, then perhaps the grim reality will come more sharply into focus—Mormon leadership themselves are clearly conveyors of a faith system that is “apostate and false.”

Distinctive No. 6 — The Mormon Jesus is a biological son of God

Because the Mormon Christ is not truly virgin born but was conceived from a literal union with the Heavenly Father and Mary, LDS view His Sonship literally. In Mormonism, use of such words as “literally,” “offspring,” “Father,” “Son,” “parent,” and “begotten” reflect the belief that Christ is the *biological offspring* of a Father and Mother Deity.

Another unique LDS doctrine is the belief that prior to His birth on earth, Christ had another literal conception in heaven, literally born as a spirit baby, this time by a Father and Mother Deity. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

The designation Father is to be taken literally; it signifies that the Supreme Being is the literal Parent or Father of the spirits of all men....All men, Christ included, were born as his children in pre-existence.⁵²

51 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 822, italics in the original

52 Ibid., p. 278, italics in the original.

Another Mormon Apostle illustrated the literal spirit Sonship of the Mormon Jesus by explaining how the wives of the Mormon Heavenly Father likely have a similar gestation period to women here on earth. Apostle Orson Pratt said in March of 1853:

The law, regulating the formation of the embryo spirit, may, as it regards time, differ considerably from the period required for the formation of the infant tabernacle of flesh....But as heavenly things are, in many respects, typical of earthly, it is altogether probable that the period required for the formation of the infant spirit, is of the same length as that required in this world for the organization of the infant tabernacle.⁵³

To be clear, LDS leadership does not explicitly state that the spirit of Jesus (and our spirits for that matter) were created through intercourse. However, most LDS will admit at least to those within LDS circles that these spirits are literally conceived, with “heavenly things...typical of earthy.”

The fact that Mormon doctrine teaches the imperative for Mormon males to acquire many wives (either here or in the hereafter) infers a literal spiritual birth process as well. Mormon male Gods need their wives to create spirit babies and are unable to simply create them on their own. The wives of each Mormon male God can look forward to an eternity of child rearing to populate the planets of her Husband.

Biblical Position

The Jesus of the Christian faith is not a biological son of God. The term "Son of God" is a title of Deity—not a designation of biological origin. The true Christ is not a literal, biological offspring of God the Father and is therefore not a literal Son of God. LDS erroneously read a literal offspring meaning into the word “Son” through transferring meaning from words used today that did not carry the same meaning in the culture of Bible authors.

Before we explore why the true Christ cannot be a literal offspring Son of the Father, consider from the Bible those who are called *sons*—even *sons of God*—with no literal, biological association:

1. Adam is a *Son of God*.

Even though Adam was made from the dust of the earth and not literally sired from an offspring God, he is known as a “son of God” (Lk. 3:38).

2. We are *Sons of God*.

Christians “become the sons of God” when through faith we accept Christ as our Savior and become spiritually born again (Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:2). There is no literal Father/son association inferred by this relationship.

53 Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 38-39

3. Nations can be called Sons and Daughters of God.

As primarily Jews and His chosen people, God corporately called the nation of Israel His “sons” and “daughters” (Is. 43:6). There obviously is no literal association here.

4. Angels are called the Sons of God.

We know from the Bible that angles are created beings and not literal sons of God, yet angels are still referred to as sons (Job 1:6; 38:7). The angels are “sons” in the sense that they were living beings brought into existence by the Creator God.

With each of these examples it should be evident that being a *son* in the Bible does not immediately imply a literal, biological association as the offspring of a paternal father and mother.

Why Jesus Cannot be a Literal “Son of God”

To help understand the true nature of Christ’s relationship with the Father, it will be helpful to discuss some key terms or titles in the following segments. In our present culture it’s natural to view this identification as descriptive of a literal parent/child relationship, whether through biological connection or through adoption. However, this relationship *is not* what Bible authors were communicating. Consulting the whole context of the Bible, Christ cannot be a literal Son of God the Father for at least four reasons:

1. A spirit Father God cannot produce a literal, biological Son.

As previously explained, the true Father God is an incorporeal spirit (without body) and therefore cannot be a literal Father of the flesh and bone Christ.⁵⁴ If the Father cannot be a literal “Father,” then the Son cannot be a literal “Son.”

This point is significant in that Mormonism ridicules the “apostate Christian world” for believing in a spirit God “without body, parts, or passions,” and prides itself in having a view of the Godhead that is logical and understandable. Yet this same body of scoffers has no problem with embracing the logical inconsistency just presented, even while a Mormon Apostle has described the probable gestation period of *spirit* babies within the bodies of *tangible* Mormon Goddesses. This Mormon-induced conundrum should be but another sign that something is wrong in the LDS gospel.

⁵⁴ Jer. 23:24; Is. 31:3; Jn. 4:24; Col. 1:15

2. Christ is the Son of the Father—Not the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 1:20 clearly identifies the conception of Christ as “of the Holy Ghost,” and not of the Heavenly Father. If Sonship were literal, then Christ would be the Son of the Holy Ghost, not the Father. Yet it is the Heavenly Father in scripture who refers to His Only Begotten Son, not the Holy Ghost. Clearly a literal flesh and blood connection is not what the Son of God means.

3. Christ the Son has always Been God.

The true Christ revealed in the Bible is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father and therefore could never have been a literal offspring Son of the Father. For example, the gospel of John identifies Jesus as “the Word,” and “the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1, 14). If Christ has always existed as the Second Person of the triune Godhead with the Father and the Holy Ghost, then there could never have been a time that Jesus could have *become* the Son.

4. Christ has always been the Son.

There is sufficient Bible evidence to demonstrate an eternally existent Father/Son relationship *prior* to the incarnation of Christ. The Old Testament says “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?...who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and *what is his son's name*....” (Proverbs 30:4, emphasis added). Note that even before there was a baby Jesus, there was a Son of God in Heaven.

We read numerous times in the New Testament that God didn’t send someone who would *become* His Son, but rather, He *sent* His Son to *become a man*. John, for example, tells us that “God *sent* not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”⁵⁵ If it was God’s Son that the Father sent to earth, then Christ was the Son before His incarnation. Mormons miss this point since they believe Christ to be a literal spirit Son of God prior to the incarnation. However as previous point number three demonstrated, this is not possible for a Christ who has always existed co-eternally with the Father.

Another indication that the Sonship of Christ had nothing to do with parental lineage is in the type (or foreshadowing) of Christ seen through king Melchisedec, who was said to be “Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God...” (Heb. 7:3). As to the *human nature* of Christ, He indeed did have a mother, a genealogy, a birthday and a time of death. However, this passage very accurately conveys Christ’s *divine nature* as the Second Person of the Godhead. Jesus has no literal parents, no bloodline genealogy or family tree to follow, no time of birth or death, for His Sonship is an eternal one, having existed always with God the Father.

⁵⁵ Jn. 3:17. See also Mk. 12:6; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:2, 8; 1 Jn. 4:14

Biblically, How is Christ the “Son” of God?

In the Christian faith, Christ is the *Son of God* not because of His incarnation, but because of His *relationship* with the Father—more specifically—His *equality* with God the Father. His Sonship then, is a functional identity rather than a literal one. Functionally, what did the title *Son of God* convey to man in the Jewish culture? It was nothing less than a claim to full Deity. Theologian Charles C. Ryrie explains:

Though the phrase “son of” can mean “offspring of,” it also carries the meaning “of the order of.” Thus in the Old Testament “sons of the prophets” meant of the order of prophets (1 Kings 20:35), and “sons of the singers” meant of the order of the singers (Neh. 12:28). The designation “Son of God” when used of our Lord means of the order of God and is a strong and clear claim to full Deity.⁵⁶

The Pharisees in fact recognized this claim to undiminished Deity when they attempted to stone Jesus for claiming to be the Son of God:

John, Chapter 5

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. 18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Author Millard J. Erickson explains this unique relationship shared only between the Father God and Christ:

...we must ask about the real meaning of the terms “Father” and “Son.” The assumption commonly made...is that these terms indicate subordination and derivation of being of a Son from a Father. This is a natural assumption for us, living almost twenty centuries after the writing, and in a very different culture, for this is what Father and Son mean in our experience. This was not necessarily so in that Hebrew culture, however. Warfield claims that the word “son” for the Jews referred less to derivation from the father and more to the likeness of the son to the father. Thus, as applied to a member of the Trinity in relationship to another, it would be an indication not primarily of subordination but of equality.⁵⁷

J. Oliver Buswell explained the Father/Son titles in the Jewish culture:

In Jewish usage the term Son of . . . did not generally imply any subordination, but rather equality and identity of nature....The name “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36) doubtless means, “The Encourager.” “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17) probably means, “Thunderous Men.” “Son of man,” especially as applied to Christ in Daniel 7:13 and constantly in the New Testament, essentially means “The Representative Man.” Thus for Christ to say, “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36) was understood by His contemporaries as identifying Himself as God, equal with the Father, in an unqualified sense.⁵⁸

56 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 217

57 Millard J. Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, Three Crucial Questions, p.89

58 J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1, p. 105

All but lost in today's culture is the fact that names in early biblical times meant so much more than they do today. Names were chosen not because they sounded good, or because they wanted to continue the father's name. Names were chosen because they described a quality or purpose in a person's life. Since names in the Jewish culture were as much vehicles for identifying a quality or characteristic as they were a legal entity, it is interesting to note that the Son of God wasn't the preferred designation that Christ used for Himself. According to Charles C. Ryrie:

His favorite designation of Himself was "Son of Man" (more than eighty times). This name linked Him to the earth and to His mission on earth. It focused on His lowliness and humanity (Matt. 8:20); on His suffering and death (Luke 19:10)....He was also the Son of David, a title that linked Him to His ancestor David and to the royal promises to be fulfilled ultimately by Messiah.⁵⁹

Christ, the “Only Begotten Son”

Another title related to Christ is the “only begotten” Son of God.⁶⁰ In the Greek, “begotten” comes from the word *monogenēs*; *Mono*, meaning “only” and *genes* meaning “begotten.”⁶¹ Strong’s Concordance defines the word as “only-born, i.e., sole; or only (begotten child).”

Because of the Mormon worldview of a flesh and bones God, much meaning is read into the word “begotten.” In his book, under the section entitled “Only Begotten Son,” Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie taught that *begotten* is to be understood literally:

These name-titles all signify that our Lord is the only Son of the Father in the flesh. Each of the words is to be understood literally. Only means *only*; Begotten means *begotten*; and Son means *son*. Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers.⁶²

LDS sometimes point to the genealogy of Christ from the “begats” in the gospel according to Matthew to prove that Christ is the literal Son of God the Father (Matt. 1:1-17). Certainly, these generations were the result of literal biological children by earthly fathers and mothers. Because Matthew never says that Jesus was begat by Joseph, can we infer that He was literally begotten by the Heavenly Father? Christian scholar Charles C. Ryrie addresses this very issue:

Matthew carefully guarded the fact of the Virgin Birth in the genealogical table of our Lord (Matt. 1:16). He recorded that Joseph was the husband of Mary, but that it was by Mary only that Jesus was born. The pronoun “by whom” is feminine singular, indicating clearly that Jesus was born of Mary only and not of Mary and Joseph.⁶³

59 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p.287

60 Jn. 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 Jn. 4:9

61 Strong’s Concordance, word #3439

62 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., pp. 546-547, italics in the original.

63 Charles R. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 279

The usual standard in early Bible times was to list the Father in genealogy accounts since the term “begat” was normally associated with the male. If God were really the literal, biological Father of Jesus, then He would naturally have been listed in the “begats” rather than Mary. Instead, the feminine singular used in Christ’s genealogy affirms that He was not born from a flesh and bones father of any kind.

It might be helpful at this point to note that just as with the words *Father/Son*, the term *begotten* does not always carry a literal, biological offspring context as evidenced by the fact that the Bible uses *begotten* of God for born-again Christians, even though we are the biological offspring of human parents, not Deity:

1 John 5:18

We know that whosoever is born [monogenes or “begotten”] of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

1 John 5:1

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born [monogenes or “begotten”] of God; and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

While LDS believe that all people are literally born as spirit children of God in a pre-existent life in Heaven, note that “begotten” is used in a current context in 1 John and describes a conditional relationship (“whosoever is,” “but he that is,” “whosoever believeth,” etc.), not an existing relationship from a pre-earthly existence. We are “begotten” on this life when we’re saved, without any context suggesting that we are literal offspring of God in a prior life.

Additionally, if *begotten* truly meant a literal siring of Christ by the Heavenly Father, then God could not have called Jesus His “Only Begotten Son,” since Mormonism teaches that He has countless other literally begotten sons in a pre-existent estate. An official Mormon teaching manual tries to solve this problem and preserve the uniqueness of Christ by once again applying a novel interpretation to the term “Only Begotten Son” of God:

Jesus is the only person on earth to be born of a mortal mother and an immortal father.
That is why he is called the Only Begotten Son.⁶⁴

Of course, neither the Bible or LDS scripture defines *Only Begotten* as a relationship between an immortal Father and a mortal mother. This meaning is poured into LDS scripture to solve the numerical problem of proclaiming a literal Only Begotten Son (Christ) existing among countless other literally begotten sons (Mormons).

So, what is the Christian interpretation of “Only Begotten” of God? Just as the title “Son” is understood metaphorically to describe the unique nature and relationship Christ shares with the

64 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 64

Heavenly Father, “only begotten” describes not a physical offspring but speaks to the unique nature of Christ. Christian cult and apologetics expert Walter Martin confirmed that Christian experts in the Greek language commonly accept this interpretation:

...the most authoritative lexicons and grammar books, not to mention numerous scholarly works, all render “monogenes” as “only or unique ‘the only member of a kin or kind, hence generally only,’” (Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon*, Vol. 2, page 1144). Moulton and Milligan in their *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, pages 416 and 417, render “monogenes” as “one of a kind, only, unique...⁶⁵

How is Jesus unique as the Only Begotten Son? We’ll consider three reasons:

1. Uniquely (Only Begotten) in His virgin birth

The true Christ child was unique in His conception, as Mary knew no man to conceive and was thus still a virgin when she gave birth.

2. Uniquely (Only Begotten) as the only Person born as a Son of God

The true Christ was unique in that many men have been born in the flesh, but none besides Christ were born *already* a Son of God in the flesh. This is a foreign concept in Mormonism where all men are born as sons of God due to the unique LDS belief that all people are born as spirit children in Heaven before coming to earth. Mormonism has the cart before the horse, however.

The Bible clearly explains that no man besides Christ has ever been born *already* a son or daughter in the flesh. Being born into a Christian family does not make you a son or daughter of God at birth. We all become sons and daughters of God spiritually, only after we are born again by accepting salvation. The Bible says “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*” (Jn. 1:12). And again, “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*” (Rom. 8:14).

3. Uniquely (Only Begotten) as not only the Son of God, but as God the Son

The Christ child was unique in that He was the only man born as a “God man.” The Christ of the Christian faith was not only a God, but He was the very God—the one and only.⁶⁶ Mormons miss this point since they reject the trinity.

Christ, the “Firstborn”

Another relevant title of Christ is that He is the “Firstborn Son” of the Father. Mormons, as well as Jehovah’s Witnesses, point to Colossians to support the idea that Christ was created, since He is “the firstborn of every creature.”

65 Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, pp. 114-115

66 Jn. 1:1, 14; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 1:19-20; 2:9

***** LDS Proof Text *****

Colossians 1:15

Who [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

In Mormonism, this passage proves that Christ is the first and oldest child born of the Heavenly Father. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained what this means to Mormons:

Christ is the Firstborn, meaning that he was the first Spirit Child born to God the Father in pre-existence....He is also the *Firstborn from the Dead*, which signifies that he was the first person resurrected....⁶⁷

These ideas are unbiblical based on the whole context of Bible.

1. The context of Colossians 1:15 disallows a created Christ.

While Jehovah's Witnesses have altered verses 16-17 to make verse 15 support their unbiblical teaching, Latter-day Saints most often simply fail to quote the following verses. Verse 16 adds that "*For by him [Christ] were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth.*" If Christ truly created all things, then He could not have been born or created Himself.

Verse 17 further clarifies that "*he [Christ] is before all things, and by him all things consist.*" Clearly, if Christ has existed before all things, then the Apostle Paul could not have been intimating that Jesus was the first spirit baby born to the Mormon Heavenly Father.

2. "Firstborn" doesn't always refer to "first in order," or birth.

As previously quoted, McConkie refers to Christ as the "firstborn from the dead." The Bible affirms this title as well. (Col. 1:18) However, was Christ actually the first person in history to be bodily resurrected, as McConkie claims? Clearly not. The Bible records those who were dead and brought back to life from the dead. This fact clearly shows that "firstborn" can mean something other than the order or origin, or a person's birth "seniority number."

So, what does the Bible mean when using this title for Christ? The title "firstborn" is referring to "first in preeminence over creation," not "first in order or sequence." Said another way, the firstborn title of Christ has nothing to do with His origin, but with His position with the Father and all of creation.

Before moving on, we would do well to always ensure we find the proper context when referring to any of the titles of Christ. In addition to the titles already discussed in this section, Christian apologist Walter Martin addressed some of the many metaphorical titles given to Christ:

67 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 281, italics in the original.

...Jesus was not a door (John 10:9), a shepherd (John 10:11), a vine (John 15:1), a roadway (John 14:6), a loaf of bread (John 6:51), and other metaphorical expressions any more than “our God is a consuming fire” means that Jehovah should be construed as a blast furnace or a volcanic cone.⁶⁸

LDS would do well to see that the “Sonship,” “Only Begotten,” and “Firstborn” titles of Jesus Christ are likewise to be taken metaphorically to describe the position and attributes of Christ. While the title “firstborn” can mean the first born child in a family, any application toward a literal birthright understanding must be tempered against the whole council of Bible teaching. To the Christian, the “firstborn of every creature” has nothing to do with Christ’s position among a family of siblings, nor of His literal “birth” from the resurrection grave, but has everything to do with His preeminence in creation, and His position with God the Father.

Distinctive No. 7 — The Mormon Jesus was once a sinner needing salvation

Mormonism has no problem with the concept that all Mormon Gods have sinned in the past, prior to becoming Gods, while working out their own personal salvation. The Christ of Mormonism is no different and certainly has sinned in the past before being exalted to Deity, but what about *after* becoming a God?

Mormon scripture, as well as Church authorities, present Christ as a God before His earthly arrival, meaning that He was therefore the only person on earth who never sinned.⁶⁹ Other LDS teaching raises serious concern, however, that the Mormon Christ could truly have been a God and completely sinless when He walked planet Earth.

In a speech given before a semi-annual general conference and reprinted in the Mormon Church owned magazine, the *Ensign*, Mormon Apostle Russell M. Nelson affirmed that Jesus “attained perfection *following* his resurrection...”⁷⁰ (emphasis added).

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained how Jesus still had some unfinished business to complete with regard to His personal salvation when He dwelt on earth:

After reigning as the Lord Omnipotent, Christ “yet had to gain a mortal and then an immortal body....Note it please, the Lord Jesus worked out his own salvation while in this mortal probation....”⁷¹

Jesus kept the commandments of his Father and thereby worked out his own salvation, and also set an example as to the way and the means whereby all men may be saved.⁷²

68 Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 208

69 *Doctrine and Covenants* 45:4; Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., pp. 129, 736

70 Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, November 1995 ed., p. 87, italics in the original

71 Bruce R. McConkie, *Our Relationship With the Lord*, pp. 8-9

72 Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, Vol.4, p.434

Mormon Prophet Spencer W. Kimball said:

However good a person's works, he could not be saved had Jesus not died for his and everyone else's sins.⁷³

Baptism is required for salvation in Mormonism⁷⁴ and was therefore one of the essential works Jesus needed to complete if He was to be obedient. Mormon Seventy Milton R. Hunter explained:

Although John recognized Jesus as a perfect man, the Master made it clear that it was absolutely necessary for even the Son of God to be baptized. He—like the least of us—must obey every law of the Gospel if He was to receive all the blessings predicated on obedience.⁷⁵

The relevant question here is, "What is baptism for in Mormonism?" An official Mormon Church teacher's manual says that "we must be baptized for the *remission of our sins*," and that "Our *sins* are washed away when we are baptized"⁷⁶ (emphasis added).

For Christians, believer's baptism is an identifying act of obedience to symbolize a new Christian's association with Christ through His death, burial, and resurrection. Even Mormonism recognizes the symbolic nature of baptism, but LDS also believe that baptism literally washes away sin.⁷⁷ Therefore, the LDS baptism is applicable to sinners, not Saviors.

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus has never needed salvation. The essential Christian doctrine is revealed from scripture in several ways:

1. Jesus is God.

The true Jesus is a God in the fullest extent of the term.⁷⁸ If words are to have meaning in Mormonism, then true Gods do not need personal salvation, in any sense of the word.

2. Jesus Never Changes.

The Bible is clear that Jesus has always been the same:

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

73 Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 207

74 *Pearl of Great Price*, Article of Faith No. 3 and 4

75 Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages*, p. 200

76 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, pp. 131-132

77 Ibid., p. 132

78 Jn. 1:1, 14; Jn. 8:58; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16

A Christ that has never changed is a Christ who could never have gone from sinner to saint at any point in time. While it is true that Jesus became a man at His incarnation, and in that sense was different than He was before His birth into mortality, Christ still remained 100 percent God at the same time. As such, none of His Deity was diminished as He retained *all* of the qualities that define a God, including a sinless life. Such Persons do not need salvation.

3. Jesus had to be a Sinless Sacrifice.

It is only because Christ was fully God (and therefore completely sinless) that the Heavenly Father accepted His sacrifice in our place. The Bible says “*For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Why did the true Jesus need to be baptized? The Bible says that Christ was baptized “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). Details on what this righteousness are not given, but there is certainly no mention of salvation. The idea of a salvation component would be incongruent with one who claimed to be God. While Christ was likely baptized to provide us an example and to validate John the Baptist’s ministry, one thing is for certain, the true Christ was never a sinner.

Salvation is for Sinners

To be sure, modern-day Mormons will ardently oppose any idea that Christ was a sinner while He walked this terrestrial orb. However, because Mormonism has accepted an unbiblical concept of the Godhead, sin, and salvation, their teaching for a sinless God working out His salvation is inconsistent, self-defeating, and wishful thinking.

The inevitable conclusion drawn from Mormon teaching is that the Mormon Christ could not truly have been a God if He did not have full possession of the qualities of Deity, or if He needed to do *anything* to work out His salvation. Salvation is for sinners, not Saviors. Perfection is not something gained in its entirety by Gods *after* their resurrection, but is something needed in its fullness to be a God in the first place. Baptism is not a law that a God must obey to receive blessing, but is a testimony from the perfect man to fallen man—modeling the death, burial, and resurrection that all would soon see, and that all must personally identify with through the death of the old man and acceptance of the new life given by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon exclaims that “Ye cannot be saved in your sins.”⁷⁹ We can discuss indefinitely to what extent the Mormon Christ was lacking in full qualities of Deity, but anyone who has to do anything for their salvation, even 0.001%, is not truly a God and is therefore not truly sinless. Such a man would not provide assurance of an acceptable substitutionary sacrifice for our sins.

79 Book of Mormon, Alma 11:37

***** LDS Rebuttals *****

LDS Rebuttal: *"The context for Jesus working out His 'salvation' is not one of a sinful being achieving personal salvation, but of an obedient Christ who set an example for us."*

Surely Christ was the example of how a Christian should live. However, you will note in McConkie's comment that Christ "worked out his own salvation, and also set an example..." (emphasis added). Both purposes are presented independently.

Yes, Christ set an example, but the whole of Mormon teaching also requires that Christ's work carry a much more practical application as well. The Mormon Christ—a spirit child of God like us—was not exempt from having to do everything that LDS have to do in order to become like the Heavenly Father.

Distinctive No. 8— The Mormon Jesus is a god by achievement

Because the Mormon Christ hasn't always been a God, he had to earn His status of Deity just like the Mormon Heavenly Father did. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explains:

He is the Firstborn of the Father. By obedience and devotion to the truth he attained that pinnacle of intelligence which ranked him as a God, as the Lord Omnipotent...⁸⁰

Mormon Seventy Milton R. Hunter said:

Jesus became a God and reached his great state of understanding through consistent effort and continuous obedience to all the Gospel truths and universal laws.⁸¹

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus has always been the one and only God.⁸²

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....

We read that Jesus was the *Word* from the beginning. This same Word (Christ) *was* God, not just a God. There is no room for advancement here.

80 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 129

81 Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel Through the Ages*, p.51. See also *Doctrine and Covenants*, 130:1

82 Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23; Jn. 5:18; 20:28; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:16; Tit. 2:13

John 8:58

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

As the "I am," Jesus in essence said, "I am God". Not "I was," for this would not necessarily convey the eternality of His Godhood. Not "I am a God," for this would not rule out the possibility of becoming a God at some point in history. Instead, Christ simply proclaimed to be God. If Jesus is truly God, then He has always been God. If He has always been God, then He has done nothing at any time to become God.

Distinctive No. 9 — The Mormon Jesus is not omnipotent

Mormon scripture affirms an omnipotent Christ.⁸³ This belief has been corroborated by church leadership, such as Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie:

Christ if the Lord Omnipotent...meaning that as Lord of all he has all power.⁸⁴

Since the Christ of Mormonism hasn't always been a God, but had to earn His status of Deity, at what time did He become omnipotent? The acquisition of all power occurred at different points depending on what Mormon source you consult. Mormon scripture says that Christ received a fullness of power during His earthly ministry after completing His *baptism*:

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 93

12 And I, John, saw that he received not of the fullness at first, but received grace for grace; 13 And he received not of the fullness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fullness; 14 And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fullness at the first. 15 And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son. 16 And I, John, bear record that he received a fullness of the glory of the Father; 17 And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.

Some LDS may try to latch onto the "fullness of the glory of the Father," thinking that this proves Christ was lacking no personal omnipotence. However, verse 17 clarifies that it was "power," not just the Father's presence that Christ was lacking.

A different answer is given by Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, who taught that Christ didn't receive fullness of power and knowledge until after His *resurrection*:

83 *Book of Mormon*, Mosiah 3:5, 17-18, 21; 5:2, 15

84 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 453, italics in original

In this life he [Christ] received not of the fullness at the first, but went from grace to grace until, in the final triumph of the resurrection, he gained the fullness of all things; and all power was given him both in heaven and on earth.⁸⁵

Christ is the Exemplar; he went from grace to grace until finally after the resurrection he gained the fullness of all things, including the fullness of truth, knowledge, and power.⁸⁶

Whichever account you wish to believe, the Mormon Christ clearly was not truly omnipotent until some point after arriving on planet Earth. Notwithstanding the evidence of a less than omnipotent Jesus *prior* to His bodily resurrection, assurance of a fully omnipotent Christ today, *after* His resurrection, is also less than assured for the following reasons:

1. First Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. described qualities of a limited Christ.

Smith characterized a Mormon Jesus whose kingdom grows even today, allowing Him to move up the ladder and take the place that the Father once held as the Father Himself moves up the scale:

...when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children.⁸⁷

The idea that a truly omnipotent Jesus would gain anything that He did not have or control before is self-defeating. With each step up the progression ladder, the Mormon Christ clearly obtains some measure of exaltation that He didn't previously have.

2. The abilities of the Mormon Christ demonstrate a limited deity.

If the word *omnipotence* in Mormonism is to have any meaning, then the Christ of Mormonism must not demonstrate any characteristics that contradict this title. Consider some self-defeating examples:

A. The Mormon Christ cannot be omnipotent because he couldn't prevent a total Church apostasy.

The Christ of the Bible clearly and emphatically declared that "*I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matt. 16:18). Yet according to Mormon doctrine, this is a promise that Christ did not keep. The Christ of Mormonism assured His early Church that He had the power to keep them from the enemy and destroyer, yet for some 1700 years—spanning from the second century to the reinstatement of the true Mormon Church in 1820—Hell indeed

85 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 129

86 Ibid., p. 300

87 Joseph Smith Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, pp. 347-348

prevailed since Mormon teaches that all churches slipped into apostasy soon after the death of the original Twelve Apostles. Does this affirm an omnipotent Lord?

The apostles in Jerusalem weren't the only people to receive a broken promise. After His post-crucifixion resurrection and ascension, the Mormon Christ appeared in America in A.D. 34 to build his Church among the early American inhabitants and once again assured them that the very gates of Hell would have no effect upon the church, or those who built upon His rock:

Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 11:39

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

Mormon history records that the survival of Christ's church wasn't assured in America either, for every church on earth had gone apostate soon after Christ's departure. Another promise not kept. Do the facts of Mormon history back up LDS affirmations of a truly omnipotent Christ?

Considering the past track record of the Mormon Christ, all Latter-day Saints should give serious consideration to another important point. In the spring of 1820, the Mormon Christ appeared to Joseph Smith Jr. to restore the apostate church. In June of 1829 this same Jesus offered Smith and two of the three witness's assurance once again that His church was safe from apostasy, and those who built upon His rock would prevail as well:

Doctrine and Covenants 18:5
(See also D&C 33:13)

Wherefore, if you shall build up my church, upon the foundation of my gospel and my rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

Biblical Position

Can these teachings describe a truly omnipotent Jesus? The Christ of the Bible has clearly said that "*Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matt. 16:18). If words mean things, then the omnipotent Christ of the Bible would not allow His New Testament churches to fall into apostasy. The Christ of the Bible added no qualifiers or conditions to the safety of His church, such as "If you shall do such and such..." or "If you will remain faithful..." He simply said that His churches would be safe. The Christ and Father God of the Bible has always ensured though the ages that there would be a faithful representation of His people upon the earth, even if that meant starting over with as few as 8 souls floating in an arc of safety over a submerged earth of wicked people (1 Pet. 3:20)!

If the "rock" that Jesus was talking about was Himself and not Peter, then His churches are eternally safe. Throughout the Bible, Jesus is referred to as the rock.⁸⁸ In several other

88 Deut. 32:4,15,18,30; 2 Sam. 23:3; Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 10:4; 1 Pet. 2:6-8

passages Jesus is referred to as the "stone" or "cornerstone."⁸⁹ The rock was not Peter, presiding over the early Mormon Church. The rock was not Peter, the first Pope, presiding over the Catholic Church.

It is inconceivable that Jesus would have built His churches at such personal expense and then place the safety and preservation of His people upon the faith and abilities of sinful, fallen man. Satan, the god of this world, could defeat a church built upon such credentials. True Christianity, however, places their faith on the Solid Rock which cannot fail, and rests assured in the blessed promise of God's word, which says:

Ecclesiastes 3:14

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

* * * LDS Rebuttal * * *

LDS Rebuttal: "Book of Mormon and D&C citations claim only that *IF* the people built upon the rock that the gates of hell would not prevail against *THEM*—not the Church."

First, this is not what the Christ of the Bible has said. His promise was unconditional. But more problematic than that for LDS, Mormon scripture teaches that three Nephite Apostles from America plus the Apostle John from Jerusalem are still living and preaching the gospel until Christ returns.⁹⁰ The Book of Mormon says of the Nephites from America that "Satan could have no power over them, that he could not tempt them..." (Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 28:39). This is a built-in guarantee that at least 3-4 apostles would build upon the rock and ensure the Church's survival.

To resolve this conflict, some LDS may conclude that the four immortal Apostles must themselves have fallen into apostasy, but this rationale is not only unsupportable by Mormon scripture but would only further illustrate the lack of omnipotence and omniscience of the Mormon Christ. Once again, the *Book of Mormon* says that Satan would have no power over the Apostles and could not tempt them. This is a guarantee in Mormon scripture that a complete falling away of the church is impossible.

B. The Mormon Christ cannot be omnipotent because he is unable to create anything from nothing, nor annihilate it.

Mormon scripture describes a parallel account of the original six days of creation in the *Pearl of Great Price*, but like many things in Mormonism, it differs from the Biblical account. Some excerpts follow:

89 Matt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10; Lk. 20:17; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4,7

90 *Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 28:4-9,38-40; *Doctrine and Covenants* 8:1-3

Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 3:14

...We will go down...and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

Abraham 4:1

And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

Abraham 4:27

So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them.

Note in the first quotation that the availability of building materials was a factor for the creation-limited Mormon Gods—Christ being the principal agent—when deciding where to make the universe and everything in it. In chapters four and five of Abraham we see the action words *organized*, *formed*, and *prepared* no less than 22 times. Conspicuously absent from the creation account is perhaps the most obvious word of all...*created*. The title heading for chapter four mentions the “six days of creation,” however the action words *create* or *creation* are deliberately absent from the scripture text. This careful choice of wording reflects LDS doctrine that limits the Mormon Jesus by teaching that He *cannot* create anything (material or spiritual) from nothing. Consider the following Mormon revelations:

(1) A Christ unable to create physical matter from nothing.

Latter-day Saints have, in addition to the biblical Genesis, two modern restorations of ancient scriptural accounts of the Creation...This understanding differs from both scientific and traditional Christian accounts in that it affirms God's purpose and role, while recognizing creation as organization of preexisting materials, and not as an ex-nihilo event (creation from nothing).⁹¹

Mormon Apostle Bruce McConkie taught:

To *create* is to *organize*. It is an utterly false and uninspired notion to believe that the world or any other thing was created out of nothing or that any created thing can be destroyed in the sense of annihilation. "The elements are eternal."⁹²

First Mormon President and Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. said:

Now, I ask all who hear me, why the learned men who are preaching salvation, say that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing? The reason is, that they are unlearned in the things of God...But I am learned, and know more than all the world put together. The Holy Ghost does, anyhow, and He is within me, and comprehends more than all the world...Now, the word *create* came from the word *baurau*, which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize

91 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, p. 340

92 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 169

materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos--chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end.⁹³

The Christ of Mormonism was limited to working with what he could already scrounge up. On September 6, 1856, Mormon Apostle Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor to President Brigham Young, explained the matter:

...[God] did not create this earth any more than the potter created this pitcher. The potter took the rough material...and made it just in the shape you see it now. It was so with our God. The elements were already created, and he took them and shaped them into an earth; and this is the way that all things are organized.⁹⁴

On April 9, 1852, second Mormon President and Prophet Brigham Young described the initial creation of the world as a farmer arranging the existing raw materials, he could find to grow trees and plants of every kind. The creation-limited Christ of Mormonism even had to bring His garden seeds from another world since He could not grow any thing without the seed from a previously growing thing.

They came here, organized the raw material, and arranged in their order the herbs of the field, the trees, the apple, the peach, the plum, the pear, and every other fruit that is desirable and good for man; the seed was brought from another sphere, and planted in this earth.⁹⁵

(2) A Christ unable to create spirits from nothing.

A previous article demonstrated that the Mormon Heavenly Father cannot create spirits from nothing, but has to use “self-existent spirit element.” The Mormon Jesus can no more create from nothing than his Father can.

Biblical Position

Can these facts describe a truly omnipotent Jesus? The implication from Mormon teaching is that both we and ultimately Jesus Himself is at the most basic level a product of the universe as pre-existent matter, rather than the universe being a creative product of Christ. This truly is not the omnipotent Christ of the Christian faith. Consider what the Bible says about the creative work of Christ:

John 1:3

All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.

93 Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 350-352

94 Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 5, p. 219

95 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p. 50

Christians accept this scripture at face value. *All things* would include any initial or primal creative elements used to make things. There is nothing in the text to restrict the word *made* to merely *form* or *organize*.

Colossians 1:16

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.

All things have been created by the Christ of the Bible— both the “visible” (physical matter) and “invisible” (spirit matter). Christ, like the Father described in the previous chapter, can make something *ex nihilo*, meaning to create out of nothing.

C. The Mormon Christ cannot be omnipotent because he is bound to operate under certain pre-existent eternal laws and principles.

Like the Mormon Heavenly Father, the Christ of Mormonism must operate within certain eternal laws and principles which He did not create, did not define, and cannot to this day control. Existing prior to the Mormon Christ were such eternal realities as good, evil, love, hate, choice, will, faith, repentance, progression, and hundreds of other similar verities.

Biblical Position

Can these facts describe a truly omnipotent Jesus? The implication of LDS teaching on this matter is that instead of certain *universal laws being subject to Christ* because He made them and defined them, the Mormon Christ is *Himself subject to universal law* in the sense that “an untold number of these everlasting laws,” defined His creation abilities. This surely does not describe a truly omnipotent Christ.

While the Jesus of Mormonism was becoming acquainted with what love is, the Bible says the true and everlasting “God is Love” (1 Jn. 4:8). While the Christ of Mormonism was memorizing the Periodic Table of Elements and becoming acquainted with the First Law of Thermodynamics, fission and fusion, nuclear physics, electromagnetic force, and the operative laws needed to set Saturn’s 17 moons in orbital motion without collision; the Bible says the true and everlasting Jesus simply “*established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion*” (Jer. 10:12).

There are no eternally worn and tattered textbooks on the eternal bookshelves of the true Jesus explaining trigonometry, physics, or *Quantum Theory 101 for World Builders*, for the Bible declares that in the person of the true and everlasting Jesus “*are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col. 2:3).

While the Christ of Mormonism likely needed to graduate the *Galactic Human Genome Research Institute* and become acquainted with double-stranded ribonucleic acid synthesis

before He cobbled man together from pre-existent building matter, the true and everlasting God created man from nothing and breathed the breath of life into man's nostrils for "*in him was life*" (Jn. 1:4).

Simply said, the laws are eternal not because the true Christ had to learn them, but because the eternal God has said they are so.

D. The Mormon Christ cannot be omnipotent because he exists with countless other gods.

Like the Mormon Heavenly Father, the Christ of Mormonism shares His existence with countless other true and living Mormon Gods throughout the expanses. This existence of other "omnipotent" Gods is clearly self-defeating if Deity is to be truly omnipotent:

(1) If other "omnipotent" Gods exist, then the Mormon Christ cannot be omnipotent. By definition there can only be one all-powerful Deity. Omnipotence is an unshared quality. A Mormon deity with total power limited only to a certain domain is also not all powerful. What happens if the Mormon Christ is challenged by another older, wiser, and more powerful God?

(2) The Christ of Mormonism is to some extent subject to the rule of His God, the Heavenly Father. However, a truly omnipotent God answers, obeys, or reverences no one.

(3) The Mormon Christ must share space and available resources without the spectrum of eternally existent and finite matter that cannot be created from nothing. Therefore, any other god that has used up available matter for His creations is matter not available for other Mormon gods and it is not under the control of the Mormon Christ. A truly omnipotent Christ is not so hindered.

Biblical Position

The Bible affirms that Christ is omnipotent in the fullest sense of the word and gives no hint that He ever was less than all-powerful at any time:

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Revelation 19:6

...Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

A less than omnipotent Father cannot give the Christ all power if He isn't Himself in full possession of this characteristic of Deity. Job in the Bible said about God "*I know that thou canst do every thing...*" (Job 42:2). The Psalmist said "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Ps. 115:3).

If the word *omnipotent* in Mormonism is to have any meaning, then any god who cannot keep his church from being stolen by the Devil for seventeen centuries cannot be a truly omnipotent Christ. A Mormon Jesus who cannot create anything “from scratch,” nor annihilate it into nonexistence cannot be counted among the ranks of the omnipotent. Any god who has to manage eternally pre-existent laws that he didn’t create and that are older than him is not the same omnipotent Lord revealed in the pages of the Bible. Any god who shares time and space with countless other “omnipotent” gods gone before Him is omnipotent only insofar as no other gods or saviors decide one day to exert their omnipotent powers in opposition to the deity of this world.

Distinctive No. 10 — The Mormon Jesus is not omniscient

The present all-knowing abilities of the Mormon Christ are affirmed by LDS authorities⁹⁶ and from Mormon scripture:

Doctrine and Covenants 38:1-2
(See also D&C 93:26)

Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ...the same which
knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes...

In contrast to the Bible Jesus, however, at least one Mormon Apostle claimed that Christ’s omniscience wasn’t obtained until after His resurrection. Bruce R. McConkie taught:

Christ is the Exemplar; he went from grace to grace until finally after the resurrection he
gained the fullness of all things, including the fullness of truth, knowledge, and power.⁹⁷

Despite these affirmations of omniscience, the Mormon Christ cannot be omniscient. As already demonstrated in another article on the Mormon Heavenly Father, teachings by Mormon Prophets and Apostles have intimated that the Heavenly Father continually gains knowledge. As the Mormon Heavenly Father goes, so goes then the Mormon Christ.

Secondly, if the word *omniscience* is to have any meaning, then we must expect the knowledge of the Mormon Christ to demonstrate this ability and not contradict it. Evidence of the Mormon Christ’s lack of omniscience is seen thru a few examples:

1. A lost church demonstrates a less than omniscient Christ.

As was demonstrated in the last section, the Mormon Jesus promised no less than two groups of apostles on more than one occasion that His church would never be defeated by the Devil, and yet He evidently couldn’t see that His church indeed would be overcome and totally

96 Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 426

97 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 300

apostate in just a few years after His departure. This lack of foresight doesn't support a truly omniscient Christ.

2. Failed prophecy and poor judgment demonstrate a less than omniscient Christ.

The Christ of Mormonism reveals a legacy of failed prophecies and poor character judgments he has made over the years in which he failed to see the true heart of people and the final outcome of events.

Lest any LDS attribute the failed prophecies and poor judgments to the mouthpiece Joseph Smith Jr. instead of Christ, consider that Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie verified that the first person language from the "Lord" in these revelations were the words of Christ—not Joseph:

As now constituted the Doctrine and Covenants contains 136 sections....Most of these came to Joseph Smith by direct revelation, the recorded words being those of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.⁹⁸

This article doesn't focus of false prophecies, but here are a few exhibits that question the omniscience of the Mormon god:

A. A temple in Independence, Missouri

The Mormon Christ prophesied that a temple would be built on a specific temple lot in Independence, MO during the generation then living.⁹⁹

No temple has been built there even to this day. The specific temple lot is now owned by a Mormon splinter group so current Mormon leadership couldn't build there today even if they wanted to. Should we expect a truly omniscient Christ to foresee that this property would fall into the wrong hands and frustrate the anticipated building during Joseph Smith's generation?

B. Mormon Apostle Thomas Marsh to do great things

The Mormon Christ prophesied that Mormon Apostle Thomas B. Marsh would do "a great work" for the Lord, "unto the ends of the earth." In fact, the Mormon Christ knew Marsh so well that He entrusted him with "the keys of the kingdom."¹⁰⁰

Despite this highest endorsement, Marsh was excommunicated less than two years later and never did any of the great works foretold.¹⁰¹

Should we expect a truly omniscient Christ to foresee this sinful stain upon His church and prevent such an embarrassing endorsement from being forever included in Mormon scripture? Would the omniscient Christ's high praise have likely caused others in His church to stumble?

98 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd. ed., p. 206

99 *Doctrine and Covenants* 84:1-5,31

100 *Doctrine and Covenants* 112:2-4,6-7,11,16,34

101 *History of the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 284

As a percentage, relatively few Mormons are ever excommunicated, which is a serious offense and the strongest action that the church can take upon a church member. Could the omniscient Christ not have found somebody else who would honorably fulfill his commitments?

C. Mormon Apostle David Patten to go on a mission

The Christ of Mormonism explained that David W Patten was to perform a mission the following spring.¹⁰² The only problem with this revelation from the Mormon Christ was that Patten didn't live long enough to make this revelation come true. Patten died six months after the proclamation in the fall of the same year.¹⁰³ While it's arguably one thing for a Mormon prophecy to go unfulfilled because of a rebellious church member, Patten likely didn't die to get out of the job.

Biblical Position

In comparison, the Christ of the Bible is truly omniscient in every sense of the word and we can trust the word and message He has given us in the Bible. The Bible affirms His unqualified omniscience:

Psalm 147:5

Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

Romans, Chapter 11

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?

The Bible affirms that the true and omnipotent Christ knows the evil thoughts in men's minds without them even speaking a word (Matt. 9:4). And like the Father, the Bible speaks of a Christ "in whom as hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2-3). A truly omniscient Christ would not have promised the protection of His church if He could have seen its eventual demise until Joseph Smith Jr. came along. A truly all-knowing Christ would not have issued prophecies of events to come if He could have foreseen their unfulfilled future.

Distinctive No. 11 — The Mormon Jesus is not immutable

Mormon scripture affirms an immutable Lord.¹⁰⁴ Mormon authorities affirm an unchanging, immutable Christ. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie said, "All of the Lord's counsels are

102 *Doctrine and Covenants* 114:1

103 *History of the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 171

104 *Book of Mormon*: 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 29:9; 3 Nephi 24:6; 3 Nephi 24:6; *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:12,17; 76:4

eternal and immutable.... They stand forever.... Those who reject them 'shall perish.'"¹⁰⁵

Despite these affirmations, the actions and doctrines of their Jesus demonstrate otherwise:

1. The Mormon Christ is not immutable because past Mormon Apostles and Prophets have acknowledged that he changes.

Several Mormon Prophets and Apostles taught that the Father God is indeed a changing God.¹⁰⁶ As the Father of Mormonism goes, so then does Jesus.

2. The Mormon Christ is Not immutable because he changes his mind.

The Mormon Christ has demonstrated His changing nature from the decrees that He has given and changed in the less than 200-year existence of the Mormon Church (established April 6, 1830). Consider the following practical examples of doctrinal reversals:

A. The Mormon Christ Changed the Number of Wives Authorized in Marriage.

The Mormon Christ flip-flopped not only once but twice within a twelve-year period regarding His policy on wives and marriage. His first revelation in Mormon scripture was given in February 1831 where He clearly commanded a *monogamous* relationship for marriage. "*Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else...*"¹⁰⁷ We read again that "*Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.*"¹⁰⁸ That sounds a lot like the Christian "till death do you part" weddings in Christian churches that Mormon leadership readily rebuffs.

Even though the first *Book of Commandments* described polygamy as "fornication" and a "crime," Christ's criminal law would be overturned only 12 years later. New revelation from the Mormon Jesus was recorded on July 12, 1843, which not only decriminalized polygamy, but required its practice.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, as Joseph Smith Jr. and his church brethren were busy accumulating multiple wives, the United States government didn't see the same virtues in polygamy and passed legislation that made such relationships illegal. Mormon leadership was also under increasing pressure to abandon polygamy or face adverse action from the government, not the least of which was ineligibility for admittance into the Union. Utah was still a territory at the time.

105 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 166)

106 Mormon Prophet Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p. 93; Ibid., Vol. 11, p. 286; Apostles Wilford Woodruff, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 6, p. 120; James Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 430

107 *Book of Commandments*, Chap. XLIV, vs.22, p.91 Note: The 1833 *Book of Commandments* was the predecessor to the current *Doctrine and Covenants*, which assumed the new name in 1835.

108 Ibid., Section CI, verse 4, p. 251

109 *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 132

Coincidentally, the Mormon Jesus waffled yet again just 47 years¹¹⁰ after His second declaration requiring polygamy. On September 24, 1890, Mormon President Wilford Woodruff declared the practice of polygamy no longer authorized on earth.¹¹¹

The Christ of Mormonism clearly changed His mind when we consider a laundry list of statements from the Prophets and Apostles of Mormonism who are on record declaring that polygamy was to continue on earth forever, and was essential if the Saints were to become Gods in the highest Mormon heaven. This assurance came from no less authority than second President and Prophet Brigham Young, fourth President and Prophet Wilford Woodruff, sixth President and Prophet Joseph F. Smith, Apostles Orson Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, George Q. Cannon, and others. For purposes of this article, I'll highlight just two statements by a Mormon Prophet and an Apostle as we consider whether they thought polygamy would ever be discontinued on this earth. Mormon Prophet Brigham Young said:

I heard the revelation on polygamy, and I believed it with all my heart, and I know it is from God--... 'Do you think that we shall ever be admitted as a State into the Union without denying the principle of polygamy? If we are not admitted until then, we shall never be admitted.'¹¹²

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt defended everlasting polygamy in this world when he said:

...if plurality of marriage is not true or in other words, if a man has no divine right to marry two wives or more in this world, then marriage for eternity is not true, and your faith is all vain, and all the sealing ordinances, and powers, pertaining to marriages for eternity are vain, worthless, good for nothing; for as sure as one is true the other also must be true.¹¹³

It's a bit ironic that these very same Mormon Prophets and Apostles who promised an everlasting state of polygamy would be excommunicated if they were still living and marrying multiple wives today! Yes, LDS still follow the one true Church that hinges on the now clearly false teaching of these men. In an interesting change of heart, it was the same Mormon Prophet who announced the discontinuance of polygamy in 1890 who himself said in 1869 that Mormons were to practice polygamy "come life or death."¹¹⁴

Latter-day Saints will of course deny that any Mormon Prophet or Apostle was wrong, but some LDS may benefit from knowing that one prominent *Book of Mormon* witness charged the leadership of Mormonism with false doctrine. After his excommunication, David Whitmer said the following:

110 The initial polygamy commandment was "recorded" in the D&C on July 12, 1843, although historical evidence indicates that Joseph Smith was already engaged in the practice, leading some LDS apologists to claim the revelation was really given earlier..

111 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Official Declaration—1

112 *Deseret News*, October 10, 1866

113 Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:296

114 Wilford Woodruff, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 13, pp. 165-166

I desire to say a few words especially to the Latter Day Saints who believe in the doctrine of polygamy. Why is it that you can put your trust in a man, and believe a revelation of his that contradicts the Word of God in the Book of Mormon, is very strange indeed ... that revelation is a plain contradiction of the Word of God in the Book of Mormon. This is plain enough for any one to see and understand. Can you not see that this revelation is not of God? Why, oh why are you trusting in an arm of flesh? . . . you are believing in a revelation purporting to come from God, that He had changed and allowed his people to practice what He says is a sin and an abomination in his sight!¹¹⁵

Interestingly, although Mormon polygamy was discontinued on earth in 1890, no Mormon prophet has since seen fit to remove the commandment approving it from *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 132, where it stands even today. A look at two verses in this section presents perhaps the most troubling issue with the flip-flops by the Mormon Jesus, as He called the commandment to practice polygamy an “everlasting covenant” which was to be practiced as given or face damnation.

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132

4 For behold, I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant, and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. 6 And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.

The damnation mentioned here is not an assignment to Hell, but a restriction from entering the highest of the three Mormon heavens (the Celestial Kingdom).

Another problem for the Mormon God’s revelation is that His male servants were said to have received wives and concubines *from the beginning of creation*:

Doctrine and Covenants 132:38

David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

If the Mormon God was truly unchanging and immutable, and His eternal laws just and true for all times, then why would He break his “promise” and discontinue an association as old as “the foundation of the world?” Who’s in chart here?

When all the facts and comments on Mormon polygamy are laid out, one cannot ignore one nagging perception. As the US government was passing laws against the practice, why do you really think polygamy on earth was cancelled? It certainly looks like the Christ of Mormonism abandoned this practice not because of any change in galactic economy, but because of political and military pressure brought to bear upon the inhabitants of Salt Lake valley by the

115 David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, p.44

U.S. government. It appears that the Mormon Christ of Mount Calvary was no match for the U.S. mounted Cavalry! Clearly, the Christ of Mormonism changed His mind on this everlasting covenant and therefore cannot be immutable if the word is to have any meaning. Certainly, a Mormon Christ who goes back on his “everlasting covenant” cannot truly be an unchanging God.

***** LDS Rebuttals *****

LDS Rebuttal: *“The Lord didn’t break His everlasting covenant since polygamy still continues in Heaven.”*

However, for Mormons to gain entrance into the Celestial Kingdom requires faithful obedience to all LDS laws while here on earth.¹¹⁶ If Mormon worthiness to enter the Father’s glory depends on the works and worthiness done here on earth, so too must the covenant of polygamy be performed on this earth as well.

B. The Mormon Christ changed the number of witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

The *Book of Mormon* was translated from Golden Plates that Joseph Smith said he received from an angel named Moroni. Because these plates were conveniently returned to Moroni after Smith’s translation and are therefore not available for review, the importance of any eyewitnesses to corroborate the existence of the plates is of great importance. The Mormon Jesus issued a covenant revelation in March of 1829, which limited the viewing of the Golden Plates to only *three* eyewitnesses besides Smith. Following are selected verses from this revelation:

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 5

3 And I have caused you that you should enter into a covenant with me, that you should not show them except to those persons to whom I commanded you...11 And in addition to your [Joseph Smith’s] testimony, the testimony of three of my servants...unto whom I will show these things [the Golden Plates]...13 I will give them power that they may behold and view these things [the Golden Plates] as they are; 14 And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation...15 And the testimony of three witnesses will I send forth of my word.

The three witnesses are identified in section 17 of the Doctrine and Covenants as Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. Their testimony is included in the preface pages of the *Book of Mormon*. Note that the Mormon Lord says that by the testimony of “three witnesses” will He send forth his word. This specific number of witnesses is affirmed elsewhere in Mormon

¹¹⁶ Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 116; Mormon Teaching Handbook, *Gospel Principles*, p. 297

scripture.¹¹⁷ We'll look at just one other mention of the three in a different book of Mormon scripture, the Book of Mormon:

Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi, Chapter 27

12 Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken [Joseph Smith], the book [Book of Mormon] shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered...13 And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men; for the Lord God hath said that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead.

Note in verse 13 that the only exception to the three modern-day witnesses to the Book of Mormon are a few ancient and deceased Mormon prophets whose writings later become compiled on the golden plates. Footnote "a" for verse 13 identifies some of these dead prophets as Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni. This passage certainly does not authorize more than three modern-day witnesses to the Golden Plates.

Despite the Lord's clear and multiple assurances of only 3 witnesses, He clearly changed His mind at some point since the preface pages of the Book of Mormon contain the testimony of 8 additional witnesses of the Golden Plates. They testify in part:

Book of Mormon, Preface

...Be it known...That Joseph Smith, Jun., has shown unto us the plates...which have the appearance of gold...we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon...And this we bear record...that which we have seen.

C. The Mormon Christ Changed His Command to Practice Communal Living.

At one time in LDS History, the Mormon Lord established a *covenant* with His Church that required a communal system for managing personal property, known as the *United Order*. Each Mormon was to first give *all* of his possessions to Church leadership, who would then give back what was sufficient to meet the contributor's needs. The residual personal belongings were then maintained by the Church and redistributed to those in need. This original commandment was recorded in the first 1833 *Book of Commandments*,¹¹⁸ (the original title of the *Doctrine and Covenants*).

A little over a year later the Mormon Lord commanded His children to follow and obey the United Order. Current Mormon scripture contains the March 1832 revelation.¹¹⁹

117 *Book of Mormon*, Ether 5:3; *Doctrine and Covenants* 17:3

118 Chapter XLIV: 26, 27-32, 42

119 *Doctrine and Covenants* 78:3-6,7,11-12

Between these two separate revelations, Christ three times described the United Order as a *covenant*, twice as *everlasting*, twice again as a practice that *cannot be broken*, and once as *permanent*. The Mormon Christ assured followers that it was for “the salvation of man” and that faithful adherents would receive “a place in the celestial world.”

Additionally, for those who broke the United Order Covenant, the Mormon Jesus used descriptors such as “condemned, unjust, guilty, transgressors, cursed,” and unable to escape God’s “wrath.”¹²⁰ Those who did not give their portion would also be “cut off,” unable to “escape the buffetings of Satan,” and “with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.”¹²¹

Despite the obvious importance of this Mormon revelation, the Christ of Mormonism had to abandon His policy on April 23, 1834, scarcely three years later for lack of joyful participation by the Saints in giving up their property. Now recorded in the current *Doctrine and Covenants*,¹²² the introduction to the revelation says that “The United Order at Kirtland was to be temporarily dissolved and reorganized....”

Amazingly, even while reversing His everlasting covenant, the Mormon Jesus still referred to His initial commandment as an “everlasting order....With promise immutable and unchangeable” (D&C 104:1-2). Does this sound like a truly immutable and omnipotent God who had to adjust his covenants when His Saints don’t follow His commandments? Or does it sound like a Christ who’s in denial as to having changed his everlasting word which was just broken.

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus is immutable and has never changed in any of His attributes, including His commandments and decrees to man. The Bible declares clearly that Christians worship “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*” (Heb. 13:8). The Lord Himself said, “*For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed*” (Mal. 3:6). The true, unchanging, and immutable Christ could not have changed His Word for He affirmed that “...*the scripture cannot be broken*” (Jn. 10:35). It is because of these immutable characteristics of the true God that we can have eternal hope that the blood of Jesus Christ will forever be an “everlasting covenant” for sinners, for Christ keeps His covenants (Heb. 13:20).

How this stands in contrast to the Lord of Mormonism, who joined in covenant with His people in all three examples given, yet today has a different understanding in each case. The Christ of Mormonism who once rejected polygamy as a “crime” and “fornication,” is the same Lord Who later decriminalized, approved and even mandated its practice, only to change His ways yet again and prohibit it. The Mormon Christ who once said of the golden plates that “none shall behold it be that three witness shall behold it,” is now the same Christ who displays statements of eleven witnesses in the front covers of every *Book of Mormon*. The Mormon Christ who once

120 *Doctrine and Covenants* 104:3-5, 7-8

121 *Doctrine and Covenants* 104:9, 18

122 *Doctrine and Covenants* 104:47,50,52-53

required all property to be given to His Church for distribution or face being “cast out,” is the same Jesus who now allows all to keep their property and donate to the church through a ten percent tithe, and a monthly offering equivalent to one day’s meals during a fast and testimony meeting. This cannot describe the same truly immutable God revealed in the Bible.

All LDS should once again consider the teaching of Mormon Prophet Spencer W. Kimball, who rightfully acknowledged the unchanging character of a true God when he said that "The Lord's program is unchangeable. His laws are immutable. They will not be modified. Your opinion or mine does not alter the laws...."¹²³

All fact-finding LDS should heed the words of the Mormon Christ, who appears to take the issue of covenant breaking very seriously when He says regarding a witness to the Book of Mormon that “...if he deny this he will break the covenant which he has before covenanted with me, and behold, he is condemned.”¹²⁴ Should not a God who fails to keep his end of his covenants be under the same condemnation as well?

* * * LDS Scripture Contradictions * * *

The changing Christ of Mormonism operates uncharacteristic of the following LDS scriptures:

Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 9:16

...for the Lord God hath spoken it, and it is his eternal word, which cannot pass away.

If Second Nephi is true, how could the Lord of Mormon change his first person spoken words in LDS scripture as we have seen with His everlasting covenant on communal living?

Book of Mormon, Alma 41:8

Now, the decrees of God are unalterable; therefore, the way is prepared that whosoever will may walk therein and be saved.

Christ, speaking of the commands and promises in the Doctrine and Covenants, said unapologetically that His word was steadfast and unchanging:

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 1

37 Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled. 38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

123 Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 249

124 *Doctrine and Covenants* 5:27

Doctrine and Covenants 3:2

For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

Despite the Mormon Heavenly Father's assurances, the historical record shows that all of His prophecies, promises, and covenants *have not* been fulfilled as originally given. Perhaps that is because elsewhere in His scripture He yet again contradicts His assurances, stating that He reserves the right at any time to go back on any of His word:

Doctrine and Covenants 56:4

Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good...

If this describes the attributes of the immutable, unchanging Christ of Mormonism, how can any Latter-day Saint have assurance of his faith or salvation? The LDS Lord has an escape clause written in scripture anytime he wishes to use it. The God of Mormonism reserves the right to change His mind, and change His mind He has. Should this be an issue? We'll let Mormon scripture have the last word on that:

Book of Mormon, Mormon 9:19

....And behold, I say unto you he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God...

Distinctive No. 12 — The Mormon Jesus is internally inconsistent

The Christ of Mormonism has exhibited characteristics that violate the internal consistency that a just and righteous God should have. Consider the commandment to practice polygamy in light of the following Mormon scripture:

Doctrine and Covenants 58:21

Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.

This command was given to Joseph Smith on August 1, 1831, which was in effect before the Mormon God later commanded polygamy in 1843. Can one honestly say that polygamy was authorized by the states in that day?

And of course, the Mormon Jesus once allowed Latter-day Saints to practice polygamy when His scripture condemned others who did so.¹²⁵

125 *Book of Mormon*: Jacob 2:23-24,26-27,31; 3:5; Mosiah 11:2; Ether 10:5

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus is internally consistent. If as the Apostle Paul describes, "*the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good,*" then a truly consistent and just Christ would not command His Latter-day Saints to break the anti-bigamy and polygamy laws of the United States (Rom. 7:12).

If the Lord who is described as "just and true" (Rev. 15:3) is to remain such, then he could not require polygamy for the Mormon saints when it others in Mormon scripture were rebuffed for doing the same.

If the true Christ is truly "*the Holy One and the Just,*" then He must not command breaking morally just laws of the land for laws of the Kingdom, for it was this true Christ Who said "*Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's*" (Acts 3:14, Matt. 22:21).

Distinctive No. 13 — The Mormon Jesus created Earth with man's help

In Mormon scripture, the book of Abraham contains a parallel account of the first creation, as described by the Old Testament Abraham. The Mormon Abraham describes God's spirit children in a pre-earthly estate in heaven (known as "intelligences" in Mormonism) who helped Jesus create the world. Abraham is told that he was one of those creation helpers:

Pearl of Great Price, Abraham, Chapter 3

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; 24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down...and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell.

Official LDS scripture doesn't say much about who these "noble and great ones" were. Fortunately, LDS Prophets and Apostles have given some amplification on Christ's helpers. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, quoting tenth LDS President and Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith¹²⁶) said:

Michael or Adam was one of these. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, James, and John, Joseph Smith, and many other "noble and great" ones played a part in the great creative enterprise.¹²⁷

In the ensuing two chapters of Mormon scripture (Abraham 4-5), we read no less than 46 times that the "Gods" formed and organized various things of the creation.

126 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, pp. 74-75)

127 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 169

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus created without man's help. In the Bible we see the creative activities of the triune God revealed, where the Father is said to have created our world and everything in it.¹²⁸ We're told also that Christ created all things.¹²⁹ Additionally, the Holy Spirit was clearly involved in the creation.¹³⁰ Thus, all three persons of the one true Godhead created everything that is. We hear absolutely nothing in scripture of spirit children of God helping. In the Christian faith this would indeed be an impossibility since human kind did not exist prior to our earthly estate.

Distinctive No. 14 — The Mormon Jesus was born in Jerusalem

LDS readily agree with Christians that Christ was born in Bethlehem and many therefore assume that their extra-biblical LDS scripture supports this fact. It is not uncommon then for some LDS to be surprised when discovering that LDS scripture actually never specifically mentions "Bethlehem," but suggests a different birthplace altogether:

Book of Mormon, Alma 7:10

And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers...

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus was born in Bethlehem and the "corrected" version of the Joseph Smith *Inspired* Bible version does not change this.

Luke, Chapter 2*

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)...6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

* * * LDS Rebuttals * * *

LDS Rebuttal: "Christ was indeed born in Bethlehem. The Jerusalem mentioned in Alma is referring to the *region* of Christ's birth and not the city."

This explanation may settle the contradiction for the geographically challenged. The only problem is that Jerusalem *is not* a region, but a specific city. The region that Jerusalem resides within is Judea.

128 Gen. 1:1, Ex. 20:11, Isa. 40:28, Rev. 4:11

129 Jn. 1:1-3, 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2

130 Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps.104:30

Referring again to Luke chapter two, note the progression of Joseph's journey from the *region* of Galilee, *city* of Nazareth, to the *region* of Judaea, *city* of Bethlehem. The Bible reveals first the general area, followed by the specific city. In today's terms this would be similar to describing the state (Galilee) and city (Nazareth) that Joseph left, and the state (Judaea) and city (Bethlehem) to which he traveled.

Referring to the indexes in the back of both the *Book of Mormon* and the *Doctrine and Covenants*, one gets the feeling that LDS leadership realized this error and attempted to correct it by blurring the geographical lines of the city of Jerusalem, referring to it interchangeably as both a city and a region. In the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Jerusalem is the "*chief city of Jews and surrounding area*."¹³¹ The *Book of Mormon* index further identifies Jerusalem as the "*Lamanite city and land in land of Nephi*."¹³² So not only is Jerusalem both a city and a land in Mormonism, but it's a land within a land.

Distinctive No. 15 — The Mormon Jesus is married

Mormonism is not unique in this heresy. From the spurious Gnostic gospels to modern-day books of fiction like the *Davinci Code*, we find the false idea that the Jesus of the New Testament Bible was in fact married to Mary Magdalene. Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde taught on October 6, 1854:

...Jesus was the bridegroom at the marriage of Cana of Galilee... We say it was Jesus Christ who was married....¹³³

Hyde confirmed this important Mormon fact on more than one occasion:

...there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and on a careful reading of that transaction, it will be discovered that no less a person than Jesus Christ was married on that occasion.¹³⁴

Biblical Position

Taken in context there is simply no Biblical evidence to support that Christ was ever married in the conventional sense. However, scripture uses metaphorical language to identify Christ as the "bridegroom" of His church. Similar descriptive method is used to identify Christians who make up His church as the "bride" of Christ. Simply said, Christ was already "engaged" to be married to His Church, and as such, any wedding to Mary Magdalene (or any other earthly woman) would have been not only inappropriate, but scandalous. Consider a few Bible texts that demonstrate that the Christ of the Bible could not have been married during His earthly ministry:

131 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Index, February 1992 ed., p. 85

132 *Book of Mormon*, Index, August 1992 ed., p. 637

133 Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 2, p. 82

134 *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 259

Matthew 9:15

And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

2 Corinthians 11:2

...[F]or I [Paul] have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

The only “wedding” of Christ *is yet to come*, when we—the saved in Christ—sit down with Him in Heaven at the marriage supper of the Lamb:

Revelation, Chapter 19

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9...Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb...

*** LDS Proof Texts ***

LDS often point to the marriage of Cana where Christ performed His first miracle, inferring from the account that Christ was the groom since both He and His mother were at the event:

John, Chapter 2

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. 3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus said unto him, They have no wine. 9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

This passage is far from an affirmation that Jesus was married:

1. John never identifies Jesus as the Bridegroom.

This is perhaps a most obvious point for those reading without a preconceived idea. The wedding of Jesus is clearly read into the text by Mormons.

135

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2. Jesus was "called...to the marriage."

If Jesus were really the bridegroom of the wedding, would an invitation to His own marriage really have been necessary? Guests are called. Bride and Groom are not.

3. "They have no Wine" Says the Mother of Jesus.

If Jesus were truly the Groom, and the mother of Jesus the Groom's mother, then it would have been appropriate to say that "We have no wine," or "You have no wine." But of course, that's not what the scripture says. The statement "They have no wine" strongly suggests that it was the problem of some other wedding couple, and not that of Jesus.

4. The "Ruler of the feast...called the Bridegroom."

To this point Jesus had already been "called...to the marriage." There was no need for the governor to call someone who was already there if Jesus were truly the groom. If Jesus were indeed the bridegroom of this wedding, verse nine would have "called Jesus." Instead, we read that the "bridegroom" is called. This strongly suggests that Jesus was not the bridegroom.

5. What's the name of the bride?

Not only is the bridegroom never mentioned, but the bride is never identified either. Scripture found it important enough to identify the names of many people who were important in the life of Christ, including His mother. It would indeed be a significant oversight not to record the name of Christ's spouse, unless there were too many to mention.

Distinctive No. 16 — The Mormon Jesus is a practicing polygamist

The Christ of Mormonism was not only married, but He was married to multiple women. The exact amount is unknown but one prominent LDS Prophet indicated that it was several. Second Mormon President and Prophet Brigham Young taught on November 13, 1870:

The Scripture says that He, the Lord, came walking in the Temple, with His train; I do not know who they were, unless His wives and children; but at any rate they filled the Temple...¹³⁶

Mormon Apostles Orson Pratt and Orson Hyde both identified at least three of these women as Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene.¹³⁷ He also affirmed that Jesus approved of the lifestyle, modeling it for others to follow. Pratt stated in November 1853:

From the passage in the forty-fifth Psalm, it will be seen that the great Messiah who was the founder of the Christian religion, was a Polygamist. ...the Messiah chose to take upon

136 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 13, p. 309

137 Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, Vol. 1, No. 10, pp. 159-160; Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, p. 259

himself his seed; and by marrying many honorable wives himself, show to all future generations that he approbated the plurality of Wives under the Christian dispensation, as well as under the dispensations in which His Polygamist ancestors lived.¹³⁸

On August 7, 1853, Mormon Seventy Jedediah M. Grant declared that the very fact that Christ was a polygamist caused Him to be crucified:

The grand reason of the burst of public sentiment in anathemas upon Christ and his disciples, causing his crucifixion, was evidently based upon polygamy, according to the testimony of the philosophers who rose in that age. A belief in the doctrine of a plurality of wives caused the persecution of Jesus and his followers. We might almost think they were "Mormons."¹³⁹

Biblical Position

There is absolutely no scriptural evidence to support the idea that Jesus was a polygamist, let alone married. Yes, the Old Testament mentions men with many wives, but the same Old Testament *never* records God condoning this association or saying that it was required. We read instead that when the children of Israel were being prepared by God to conquer the land of Canaan and appoint their own King to rule therein, that "*Neither shall he multiply wives to himself...*" (Deut. 17:17). God's model was not for his people to accumulate wives.

Ex-Mormon authors Jerald and Sandra Tanner address Old Testament polygamy:

To say that plural marriage is right because it was practiced in the Old Testament makes no more sense than to say that God approves of slavery since it was also practiced in the Old Testament. . . . For instance, divorce was common in the Old Testament, but Jesus said: "...Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so." (Matthew 19:8)

Polygamy, as well as divorce, was instituted by man, not God. Jesus said that the perfect pattern for marriage was that the twain (two) should become one flesh (Mat. 19:5)¹⁴⁰

The idea that Jesus would be a polygamist would be biblically inconsistent:

1. God's marriage model is one man and one woman.

God officiated the first marriage and set the pattern then. A man shall "*cleave unto his wife*," not wives (Gen 2:24). The apostle Paul, when teaching principles for married life, stated, "*let every man have his own wife*" (1 Cor. 7:2). Not wives [plural], but *wife* [singular]. Paul continues, "*Art thou bound unto a wife? [not your wives] seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? [not your wives] seek not a wife. [again singular]*" (1 Cor. 7:27)

138 Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, Vol. 1, No. 11, p. 172

139 Jedediah M. Grant, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p.345

140 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism-Shadow or Reality*, 1987 ed, p. 206

2. God's leadership was specifically commanded to have one wife.

When describing the qualifications for officers of the church, the Bible requires them to have one wife. How much more so the head of the Church?

1 Timothy, Chapter 3

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife...
12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife...

Clearly, the pattern of marriage appointed by God is that the twain (two, not two dozen) shall be one flesh.

Distinctive No. 17 — The Mormon Jesus is a biological father of mortal children

Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde taught on October 6, 1954, that the Christ of Mormon sired several children from His wives during His earthly ministry:

I shall say here, that before the Savior died, he looked upon his own natural children, as we look upon ours: he saw his seed, and immediately afterwards he was cut off from the earth...¹⁴¹

Hyde indicated on March 18, 1855, that just like today, people took objection to his teaching of a child-rearing Christ:

I discover that some of the Eastern papers represent me as a great blasphemer, because I said, in my lecture on Marriage, at our last Conference, that Jesus Christ was married at Cana of Galilee, that Mary, Martha, and others were his wives, and that he begat children.

All that I have to say in reply to that charge is this—they worship a Savior that is too pure and holy to fulfil the commands of his Father. I worship one that is just pure and holy enough "to fulfil all righteousness;" not only the righteous law of baptism, but the still more righteous and important law "to multiply and replenish the earth." Startle not at this! for even the Father himself honored that law by coming down to Mary, without a natural body, and begetting a son; and if Jesus begat children, he only "did that which he had seen his Father do.¹⁴²

Biblical Position

Not one extra-biblical book of LDS scripture specifically says that Christ was married and had children. This LDS doctrine is known only through the unique insight of Mormon leadership and through inference that Christ had to do what Mormon men have to do—accumulate wives on earth to jump-start the populating of a heavenly kingdom when they themselves become Gods.

141 Apostle Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol.2, p. 82

142 Ibid., Vol.2, p. 210

Distinctive No. 18 — The Mormon Jesus atoned for sin by sweating in Gethsemane

To be fair, Mormons *do not* believe that the cross was unnecessary. Mormon David L. Paulsen and Cory G. Walker write:

...Gethsemane and the cross are both necessary phases of the process of atonement, which Christ undertook on our behalf.¹⁴³

That having been said, compared to the Bible and Christians, the cross in Mormonism is eclipsed by the suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is a distinction often overlooked by non-Mormon readers who might actually get the impression that Mormonism believes in traditional orthodoxy, whereby our sins were atoned on the cross. For example, in an official Mormon Church publication, we read:

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Savior took upon himself the sins of all mankind. Jesus died for our sins on the cross at Calvary.¹⁴⁴

However, as in much of LDS doctrine, seemingly clear statements are pack with much more than they appear. Just a few pages later in the same teacher's manual the place of the atoning work began to expand:

The Savior atoned for our sins by suffering in Gethsemane and by giving his life on the cross.¹⁴⁵

We first read that the atonement was made on the cross at Calvary, then it was the cross plus the garden, and then through consultation with the teaching of LDS leadership we learn that the cross *was not* where our sins were atoned for at all. The clear and plain belief in Mormonism is that the sins of the world were ultimately atoned by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Forgiveness is available because Christ the Lord sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane as he bore the incalculable weight of the sins of all who ever had or ever would repent.....In a garden called Gethsemane...in agony beyond compare, he took upon himself the sins of all men on condition of repentance.¹⁴⁶

And as he came out of the Garden, delivering himself voluntarily into the hands of wicked men, the victory had been won. There remained yet the shame and the pain of his attest, his trials, and his cross. But all these were overshadowed by the agonies and sufferings in Gethsemane. It was on the cross that he 'suffered death in the flesh,' even as many

143 David L. Paulsen and Cory G. Walker, in an article entitled "Work, Worship, and Grace," printed in *FARMS Review*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, 2006, p. 118

144 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, 1997 ed., p.58, item numbers 7 and 8

145 Ibid., p.73, emphasis added

146 Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 337, 552

have suffered agonizing deaths, but it was in Gethsemane that "he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.¹⁴⁷

Thirteenth Mormon President and Prophet Ezra Taft Benson affirmed where the atonement of Christ took place:

It was in Gethsemane that Jesus took on Himself the sins of the world, in Gethsemane that His pain was equivalent to the cumulative burden of all men, in Gethsemane that He descended below all things so that all could repent and come to Him.¹⁴⁸

In Mormonism the cross is seen ultimately as an inevitable task that Christ had to do. The Christ of Mormonism had to endure the cross to fulfill scripture, but one gets the impression that had he gotten cold feet at the last minute and refused the cross, His payment for our sin and our opportunity for redemption would not have in any way been lessened or negated. As McConkie said, after the sweat in the garden, there remained yet only "shame," "pain," and "trials" of a cross—no mention of an atonement yet to be completed. One wonders why the Father allowed His Son to die when Christ had already won the victory in Gethsemane.

LDS believe that the Garden was effectual because Christ literally sweat blood while there. In fact, LDS scripture teaches that Jesus bled from every pore while in the Garden (D&C 19:18). However, the Bible never says that Christ actually sweat any blood in the Garden. We're told instead that Christ "sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Lk. 22:44). The "as it were" is in effect to say "was like" great drops of blood, thus making analogy that in fact shouldn't be thought unusual for the Apostle Luke, a physician himself.

Christian missionary, Timothy Oliver, says of this passage:

If it were said of a young woman that she had 'lips like roses,' everyone would understand the speaker was making a somewhat poetic comparison to highlight the beauty, perhaps the shape or color, or the young woman's lips. No one would take him to mean she had actual rose petals for lips....In an arid climate like that of Palestine, in the relative cool of the night, it would take considerable perspiration to even bead, let alone run. Blood, on the other hand might easily run from a wound. The great profusion of sweat experienced by Jesus would have seemed more like bleeding than sweating.¹⁴⁹

For the record, it is medically possible to literally sweat blood (known as *hematohidrosis*), but even if Christ literally sweat blood in the Garden, it would not have atoned for our sins, as the following biblical response explains. Note that only the gospel of Luke records that the sweat of Christ "was as" great drops of blood. Luke was a physician (Col. 4:14). This analogy would have been appropriate for Luke. Note that Jesus appeared several times to the other apostles to wake them up as they slept in the Garden. Does it not strike you odd that none of the other gospel writers found it unusual and significant enough to mention a blood drenched Jesus if he had really been sweating literal blood? Would this not have been cause for alarm, or even a

147 Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, pp. 127-128

148 *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 15

149 Timothy Oliver, *The Evangel*, Vol. 2, No. 9, pp. 8-9, September 2004

question by the other apostles to Jesus as to "what happened to your face and your clothes?" Perhaps there is no mention because there was no blood. If there was no blood, then the Mormon gospel message of redemption is without foundation.

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus atoned for sin on the cross of Calvary. The Bible is absolutely clear that the wages of sin is death—not suffering (Rom. 6:23; 5:12; 1 Col. 1:22). It wasn't the cat of nine tails that atoned for man's sin, as the 39 lashes from Roman soldiers drew chunks of flesh from Christ's body while He bled from each excruciating crack of the whip. It wasn't the sinless blood that dripped from Christ's brow that paid the penalty for man's sin, as the crown of thorns was pushed down on His Holy Head. It wasn't the trail of blood that fell from Christ's weakened, tortured body that saved man from sin, as Christ walked the trail to Mount Calvary's crucifixion. No, none of these events could have paid the price for man's sin, though the precious blood of Christ flowed freely. The Word of God is clear that it was the death of Christ upon the cross that paid the sin debt of every man.

Scripture over and over again points man to Christ's death on the cross as the efficacious point where our sin debt was paid. The Apostle Paul emphasized the primacy of the cross when he said that he "*delivered unto you first of all ...that Christ died [not sweat blood] for our sins*" (1 Cor. 15:1-3). We read that Christ, "*having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...[no mention of a garden]*" (Col. 1:20). And again, we hear from Paul, citing Old Testament scripture, that "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree. [not He who sweats in a garden]*" (Gal. 3:3). The scripture again proclaims that we have forgiveness for our trespasses through Christ, "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us...nailing it to his cross. [not the Garden]*" (Col. 2:14).

Where did Christ bear the weight and penalty for our sins? Listen to the Apostle Peter, as he described the Christ, "*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...*" (1 Pet. 2:24). Christians believe, as did Paul, "*That the preaching of the cross [not the Garden] is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God*" (1 Cor. 1:18). Paul again proclaimed the centrality of the cross when he equated the very gospel to the preaching of the cross:

1 Corinthians, Chapter 1

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

Theologian Charles Ryrie adds to scriptural evidence to demonstrate that the atonement for our sins occurred on the cross:

The sufferings of Christ in His death have been labeled His passive obedience in classical Protestant theology. This passive obedience stands in contrast to Christ's active obedience, which refers to the obedience exhibited during His lifetime....The sufferings of Christ's life, though real, were not atoning.....Strictly speaking, then, only the sufferings on the cross were atoning. It was during the three hours of darkness when God laid on Christ the sins of the world that Atonement was being made. The abuse and scourgings that preceded His time on the cross were part of the sufferings of His life.¹⁵⁰

But perhaps the best proclamation of our atonement's location comes from the Savior Himself as He hung suspended from the cross of Calvary:

John 19:30

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

To the Christ of Mormonism, the atonement was finished in the Garden of Gethsemane; but to the Christ of the Christian faith, the atonement began and was finished on the cross. What was the "it" that was finished? Certainly, Christ's suffering was finished. Yes, His personal earthly ministry was finished also. But despite these and other accomplishments, the weight of biblical revelation clearly shows that the expiation (payment) for our sin *was not* based on Christ's perspiration in a garden, but on His expiration (death), and that payment had to occur on the cross. The true Christ could not have paid for our sins by sweating blood. Even in death, a Christ beheaded, or a Christ stabbed to death, or a Christ stoned to death would not have saved. He had to pay by giving His very life, and that sacrifice was foretold to occur on a cross. As Christ gave up His life on the cross, "it," (our atonement) was finished.

Where's the Cross in Mormonism?

Not one cross can be found on or in Mormon Church grounds and buildings. Not one cross can be found on church spires or steeples. LDS faithful are taught that it is inappropriate to wear any article of jewelry containing a crucifix. Some church teaching material depicts the crucifixion of Christ, but the topic of the cross is one not often heard from those giving talks (sermons) during LDS sacrament meetings (LDS worship service). In Mormon buildings, the cross has been swapped with a golden angel or nothing at all.

In my many years in the Mormon Church, I can honestly say I never heard a talk on the cross of Christ. This fact is perhaps understandable for many reasons, first and foremost being that the cross in Mormonism simply does not identify the place where the greatest transaction in the history of the world took place. In Mormonism the cross is overshadowed by the greater work in the Garden of Gethsemane.

150 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, pp. 324-325

Secondly, the significance of the missing cross on LDS church grounds is likely lost within the complexity of the Mormon Gospel, which we are told “embraces all of the laws, principles, doctrines, rites, ordinances, acts, powers, authorities, and keys necessary to save...”¹⁵¹ As one official Mormon book of instruction imparts, “*Christ did his part to atone for our sins. To make his atonement fully effective in our lives, we must strive to obey him and repent of our sins....Christ’s atonement makes it possible to be saved from sin if we do our part.*”¹⁵² Instead of looking to the one who singularly made atonement for us through His finished work on the cross, LDS are busy earning their own salvation, in addition to the cross. In Mormonism it’s not the cross alone, but the cross plus something. As such, the magnificence and simplicity of the gospel is muted, along with the very implement of sacrifice that God used to bring it about.

Thirdly, the cross to early Mormon Church leaders was no doubt offensive because it represented the universally apostate Christian denominations that Mormonism frequently denounced. Early LDS leadership pulled no punches as they proclaimed that this same apostate “*Christianity was hatched in hell.*”¹⁵³ Why use the emblem when Mormon leadership knew that “*Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the ‘Whore of Babylon,’ ...having corrupted all the earth with their fornications and wickedness.*”¹⁵⁴ In fact, this emblem of the cross did and still does represent the Christian churches seen today by Mormonism as “all wrong,” with their creeds of “abomination to God,” and working for Lucifer as “the church of the devil.”¹⁵⁵

The Mormon Church today is much more guarded in its language, has adopted a more conciliatory tone, and has in later years been trying to present itself as just another “mainstream” Christian message. Whatever the reason for the more recent conciliatory tone, the core beliefs and disdain for other “apostate” Christian churches by Mormonism have not changed.

Dear Mormon, most assuredly, the Apostle Paul didn’t find the cross “repugnant” to his gospel message. No, to him it was the very subject of his gospel preaching, and the power of God unto salvation:

1 Corinthians, Chapter 1

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made on none effect.
18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 23 But we preach Christ crucified...

151 Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 331

152 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, 1997 ed., p. 75

153 Second Mormon President and Prophet Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 12, p. 55

154 Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 255

155 *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith–History, 1:17-19; *Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 14:10; *Doctrine and Covenants* 18:20

Again, we must ask, if the crucified Christ is that heart of the gospel and the power of God unto salvation, then how can it possibly be in poor taste to display the bare cross of our victorious and risen Savior? Muslims have their crescent, Jews have their star of David, Mormons have their angel Moroni or nondescript spires on their church buildings, but only Christians prominently display the universally recognized symbol that reminds all of the price to be paid by condemned sinners, but also of the far greater love of the one and only true God, who gave His only Son to atone for the penalty of our sins.

Distinctive No. 19 — The Mormon Jesus is one of countless saviors

On July 10, 1870, second Mormon President and Prophet Brigham Young confirmed that Jesus was *not* the only Savior for all men. In fact, we learn from Young that there are as many saviors as there are particles of matter on this earth:

But the fact exists that the Father...sent his Son to die for us....Is it so on any other earth? On every earth. How many earths are there? I observed this morning that you may take the particles of matter composing this earth, and if they could be enumerated they would only be a beginning to the number of the creations of God...Sin is upon every earth that ever was created....Consequently every earth has its redeemer, and every earth has its tempter...¹⁵⁶

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus is the only savior for all people anywhere.

Acts, Chapter 4

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth...12 Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

The declaration that there is "none other name under heaven" conveys the idea of geographical infinity. Said another way, there is "none other name anywhere...." As such, if there is only one name given under heaven whereby men may be saved, then there cannot be countless other Christ's dying for others on other worlds.

In the Christian faith, however, there is only one heaven where the one and only true God dwells (the third heaven).

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

156 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 14, p. 71

Hebrews 10:10

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

LDS completely miss these plain declarations since it is assumed to pertain only to this earth and not the countless other earths and Gods. Note, however, that we do not read a limited context of one mediator for each earth-like planet, or that Christ's death "for all," means less than everybody. Rather, we read plainly that there is only one mediator who died for all people under heaven.

Distinctive No. 20 — The Mormon Jesus caused three days of crucifixion darkness

Mormon scripture records after the crucifixion of Christ "that darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days"¹⁵⁷ until He would rise again from the dead.

Biblical Position

The Bible indicates that darkness covered the earth for a space of only three hours, not three days.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, scripture records that this darkness occurred while Jesus was still alive and on the cross prior to yielding up the ghost.¹⁵⁹ It's worth noting that none of the KJV citations provided in the footnotes were "corrected" by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired* Bible Version.

Distinctive No. 21 — The Mormon Jesus visited America after his resurrection

One way Mormon missionaries pique the interest of prospects is by teaching that the Mormon Christ visited the western hemisphere after his crucifixion. Shortly after His resurrection and ascension in Jerusalem, the Book of Mormon teaches that the Mormon Christ was seen descending out of heaven to establish His Church in America.¹⁶⁰ LDS believe these ancient Jewish Nephites came from Jerusalem, an offshoot of which being ancestors of the American Indians (Lamanites, as the Book of Mormon calls them). No archeological or historical evidence exists to verify the existence of these Nephites or Lamanites but that's an issue for another article.

The Christ of Mormon repeated several events described in the Bible, such as delivering another sermon on the mount, another discourse on the beatitudes, giving the model prayer again, and partaking in the Lord 's Supper. Large amounts of His activities bear a striking

¹⁵⁷ *Book of Mormon*, Helaman 14:20, 27 (see also 1 Nephi 19:10; 3 Nephi 10:9)

¹⁵⁸ Matt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44

¹⁵⁹ Matt. 27:50; Mk. 15:39; Lk. 23:46

¹⁶⁰ *Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 11:8; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 68

resemblance to Matthew chapters 5-7 and other citations, which we are to assume were not copied from the Bible.

Of particular interest are some other interesting events such as (1) The Mormon Christ showed a multitude of people His hands, side, and feet to convince them that He was the risen Savior they had heard about, (2) Twelve more Apostles were chosen and commissioned to preach the gospel in America and elsewhere, (3) This Jesus officially established the name of His Church, and (4) Three Nephite apostles were granted immortal status until the return of Christ. Each of these four events have problems that are beyond the scope of this article. I'll deal only with the idea that Jesus appeared in America and other locations after His ascension from Jerusalem.

Biblical Position

Despite what Latter-day Saints tell prospects, there is absolutely *no historical record* of Christ ever appearing to inhabitants of the North American or any other continent.

Some Mormon authors have done their best to find antidotal evidence of *Book of Mormon* people and events in America (and thus their record of Christ's visit) through Indian tradition and legend. No reputable non-Mormon professional believes this, but for arguments sake, let's say it's true. Where is the evidence in the American Indian traditions and oral history that records this truly monumental event? After all, the *Book of Mormon* says that Christ performed many miracles, healing "every one" of the sick and lame in the multitude of 2500. Angels and fire were seen descending from heaven and another Pentecost experiences happened with the Holy Ghost falling upon the people with fire, etc.¹⁶¹ Yet, American Indian history speaks nothing of these events.

For the record, the Lamanites (American Indians) were included in the multitude of Nephi who saw this Christ.¹⁶² Beyond the lack of historical corroboration, however, a visit by Christ to the Americas is further discredited from Bible revelation:

1. Christ said His work was finished.

The Bible tells us how many gospel missions the true Christ made for mankind:

Jude 3

Beloved...ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

After the arrest of Jesus, and leading up to His crucifixion, Christ told His accusers when the world would see Him again:

161 *Book of Mormon*., 3 Nephi 17:7-9; 19:13-14

162 Ibid., 3 Nephi 2:13-14; 10:18-19; 4 Nephi 1:1-3

Matthew 26:64

Jesus saith unto him...Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

In other words, after Christ's accusers put Him to death, the next time they would see Him would be when He comes again for His Church, to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Note that this next sighting would occur *after* Christ was seated at the right hand of God.

When was Christ seated at the right hand of God? It occurred immediately *after* His post-resurrection ascension from the disciples in Jerusalem:

Mark 16:19

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Luke 24:51

And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

Immediately after Christ had ascended, two angels asked the upward gazing disciples why they were still looking skyward:

Acts 1:11

...Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

The Christ described in the gospel according to Mark wasn't seated at the right hand in 34 A.D. *after* a swing through the Americas; He was seated at the right hand immediately *after* He left the disciples in Jerusalem. If Christ's next appearing is to occur *after* (and not before) being seated at the right hand of the Father, then He could not have made multiple visits to other continents.

The whole fact that Christ is sitting at the right hand of God in Mark 16 conveys the idea that His work was finished. Just before giving up the ghost, it was Christ Himself Who said upon the cross "*It is finished.*" (Jn. 19:30) The in-person ministry of the Mormon Christ was anything but finished, but the Christ of the Bible was.

2. Christ commissioned His disciples to be missionaries of the gospel.

While John 10:16 says that Christ must bring others into the fold, this does not imply that an "in person" witness was required by Jesus. The Christ of the Bible commissioned His disciples to go and bring others into the fold. "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...*" (Matt. 28:19). This missionary commissioning would include the Americas.

3. Multiple returns would validate imposters.

The disciples asked Christ “*what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” Jesus warned His disciples not to be deceived with these words:

Matthew, Chapter 24

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

Christ was concerned that false teachers and imposters would mislead both the lost, and Christians who were anticipating His return. He warned His followers, therefore, *not* to believe those who said they saw Christ here or there, for they would all be imposters. With this in mind, a Christ who went continent hopping after his ascension would have been a Christ who contradicted his previous admonition to the disciples not to believe any future reports of Christ sightings. Could the true Christ have truly taken actions that would by their very definition have disqualified Him in the eyes of watchful and knowledgeable Christians?

More importantly, a Christ who made multiple visits around the globe is a Christ who set a dangerous precedent by exposing His followers to the eternal danger of false Christ's and false doctrine.

The Bible says that the antichrist of the end times will deceive many, being a near perfect imitation of the real Jesus Christ. In the last days, the false prophet will appear, and all who are not saved will worship him (Rev. 13:8). This deceiver will *"doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do..."* (Rev. 13:13-14). This seemingly all powerful charlatan will have the power to give life even unto a manmade graven idol, which will have the ability to speak (Rev. 13:14-15). The Apostle Paul warned of a day when *"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness..."* (2 Thess. 2:9-10).

The Christ of Mormonism proved His crucifixion and resurrection to the American people through the nail scars on His body. It is likely not beyond the schemes or power of the counterfeit Christ to produce these same bruises and scars of his own. That was why it was essential for the true apostles of Christ to have been eyewitnesses of the earthly ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ! They saw His work from beginning to end—not a Christ showing up saying “this is what I’ve done in such and such a land.”

Today, the Mormon Church has given post resurrection reports, saying “Lo, here is Christ.” Report has come from the *Book of Mormon* that ancient peoples living in America “saw a Man descending out of heaven” who said of Himself “Behold, I am Jesus Christ...And behold, I am

the light and the life of the world...Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine."¹⁶³ This man claiming to be Jesus has performed many signs and wonders, say the people—from healing the sick, to angels and fire coming from heaven. But the deceiver will one day do the same.

4. Return will be unmistakable and known by all.

The safeguard for Christians to know when the real Christ returns is in a visible, pre-millennial return that will be witnessed by all people—not just a few. His coming will be as visible “*as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto thee west*” (Matt: 24:27-31). The sun and moon will refuse to give their light and stars shall fall from heaven. The angels will gather together the saved as the graves heave open at the sound of the trumpet. “[*T*hen shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory” (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Today, Jehovah’s Witnesses say that Christ has already returned to earth invisibly to usher in His millennial reign. Mormonism says He has returned visibly to North America. These events were unseen at all for Jehovah’s Witnesses, and only to the Book of Mormon people in America, for which we have no objective evidence that they were ever real historical people. But the Christ of the Bible will leave no doubt on that anticipated day, for when He comes again, He “shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). The heavens and angels will declare him, the armies of heaven will follow Him, and the wrath of His judgment will be known to all who do not know Him.

* * * LDS Proof Texts * * *

John 10:16

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

This passage does not prove that Christ made a swing through America, but only that He has other sheep. Neither does it say that Christ went anywhere to bring them to His fold. While the true Christ doesn’t explicitly say in this passage who His other sheep were, the larger context of the Bible identifies the “other sheep” as Gentiles (non-Jews).

Ephesians, Chapter 2

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision [Gentiles] by that which is called the Circumcision [the Jews] in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye [the Gentiles] were without Christ [outside the fold], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel [outside the fold], and strangers from the covenants of promise, [made to those in the fold, the Jewish Abraham]

¹⁶³ Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 11:8, 10-11, 31

having no hope, and without God in the world; 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off [outside the fold] are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14...who hath made both one [one fold], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God [one shepherd] in one body [one fold] by the cross... 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners [outside the fold], but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Paul contrasted the Christ rejecting Jewish fold that was still seeking salvation through the curse of the law (works), with the new covenant through the cross of Christ, “*That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ...*” (Gal. 3:14). He spoke of the other sheep that Christ would bring, “*That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*” (Eph. 3:6).

Christ said of his other sheep that “*they shall hear my voice.*” The scripture is clear that though Jesus—a Jew Himself—came first to be a shepherd of His own (the Jews), they would not hear his voice. The gospel was then carried affirmatively to the Gentiles:

Acts, Chapter 13

46 ...It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [Jews]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

The Jews of Christ’s day were expecting a different Messiah—a political ruler and King that would come in power, crush their enemies, and establish His kingdom on earth. This didn’t happen and most, therefore, failed to see the fulfillment of prophecy walking among them. The Gentiles, however, would hear the voice of the shepherd:

Acts, Chapter 28

26 ...Go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

The Apostle Paul—a Jew himself—would be instrumental in bringing the other sheep into the fold, for he instructed Timothy “*that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear*” (2 Tim. 4:17).

Clearly, the other sheep of the true Christ were Gentiles, not Jewish Nephites in North America. The Mormon Nephites could not have been these sheep since the *Book of Mormon* identifies

their ancestry as Jewish, having come from Jerusalem to America in 600 B.C.¹⁶⁴ The gospel had already been carried affirmatively to the Jews in Jerusalem and it was largely rejected.

Distinctive No. 22 — The Mormon Jesus has visited Earth multiple times

Mormonism speaks of a “Second Coming” event when Christ returns with His Church to set up His earthly kingdom and rule during the millennium. However, the term “Second Coming” is probably not appropriate for the Mormon Jesus since He has made the following appearances that we know of:

1. First Coming

Christ was born in Bethlehem (or Jerusalem according to the *Book of Mormon*).¹⁶⁵

2. Second Coming

Despite Christians awaiting the second coming of Christ, the Mormon Christ has already made a second coming since He appeared post-resurrection to the Mormon Nephites in America.¹⁶⁶ According to the *Book of Mormon* marginal note, this appearance happened in A.D. 34.

The Book of Mormon recounts that after a day of teaching and performing miracles with the Mormon Nephites, Jesus says “Behold, my time is at hand.” He instructed the multitude to go to their homes and ponder what they had heard and that He would return on the “morrow.”

3. Possible Third thru Twelfth Coming

Before leaving the American Nephites, the Mormon Christ said that while they pondered in their homes He was to “go unto the Father” and that He must “also show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.”¹⁶⁷ The Mormon Heavenly Father probably went with and introduced His Only Begotten Son during these visitations.

The Mormon Deity must have had a busy night since the tenth Mormon Article of Faith identifies 10 lost tribes. Assuming worse case that all ten dispersed and went their separate ways at some point, then the Mormon Christ could have visited up to 10 more people or nations overnight before returning to America! This would make ten more comings, bringing our number of visitations to twelve.

164 Book of Mormon, Introduction page; 1 Nephi 1:2

165 Ibid., Alma 7:10

166 Ibid., 3 Nephi 11:8; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 68

167 Ibid., *Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 17:2-4

4. Possible Thirteenth Coming

The Book of Mormon records Christ returning to the American Nephites the next day,¹⁶⁸ and then departing again after a second day of teaching.¹⁶⁹ We're up to a possible thirteen coming of the Lord to His people at this point in A.D. 34.

5. Possible Fourteenth Coming

The Book of Mormon records Christ (and God the Father) coming to earth visibly in the spring of 1820 to instruct Joseph Smith Jr. not to join any of the apostate churches and that he would be used to restore the true Church and gospel to the earth. Fourteen coming and counting.

6. Possible Fifteenth Coming

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were in the Kirtland, Ohio temple on April 3, 1836, when Smith records that Christ appeared "standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us" to accept the Kirtland Temple as his house.¹⁷⁰ The Mormon Christ is due some frequent-flyer miles by now, assuming this was His fifteen coming by the 1800's.

The fact is, there's no way to know how many times the Mormon Christ as come and gone visibly and bodily to the Earth. There have likely been more times than this, especially considering the well over 100 temples that Mormonism has built unto the Lord for His dwelling.

Considering the number of times that the Mormon Christ has appeared personally from heaven to different peoples on different continents, the term "Second Coming" has no practical meaning. Mormonism cannot really know how many visits or "comings" their Christ will have made before He returns finally to bring the end times to a close.

Biblical Position

Admittedly, the Bible never specifically uses the words "Second Coming". Some could see the Christ as having returned a second time already for His bodily resurrection. However, this event was foretold by Christ and was still part of His initial earthly ministry, which wasn't finished until He was resurrected and ascended unto the Father.

In either case, the Bible says that Christ was received up into heaven immediately after his post-resurrection ascension from the disciple in Jerusalem, to be seated at the right hand of the father.

Mark 16:19

168 *Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 19:15

169 *Ibid.*, 3 Nephi 28:12

170 *Doctrine and Covenants* 110:1-4

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

When does the Bible say we will see Him after this ascension? He will come again (hence His "Second Coming") when he returns visibly and unmistakably for His Church:

Matthew 26:64

Jesus saith unto him...Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

There is absolutely no Biblical support to corroborate the idea that Christ made visits to America or to Joseph Smith Junior, and much contextual evidence within the whole teaching of the Bible to make such an event highly unlikely. As such, Christians truly anticipate a *Second Coming* event to happen at any time.

While some LDS may point to the many people that Christ appeared to in the Jerusalem area after His resurrection, He stayed and lived in the area and when He left the world He left the world. He didn't go continent hopping between various and dispersed nations and peoples like the Christ of Mormonism.

Distinctive No. 23 — The Mormon Jesus is returning to Missouri

The tenth Mormon Article of Faith says:

Pearl of Great Price, 10th Article of Faith

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...

On July 20, 1831, Joseph Smith gave a revelation from the Lord, proclaiming that Independence, Missouri in Jackson County was to be His appointed place for Zion:

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 57

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together...in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints. 2 Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion. 3 And thus saith the Lord your God...Behold, the place which is not called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse.

The Mormon Lord gave the Latter-day Saints several confirmations throughout the year of 1831 that His will was for the Saints to build up and assemble to Missouri in preparation for His return.¹⁷¹ The Lord also gave them instructions to buy up large amounts of land in all the

171 *Doctrine and Covenants* 45:66-67,71; 63:36

regions round about. On November 3, 1831, Joseph Smith issued a commandment from the Lord that all men were now commanded to assemble to Zion and prepare for the Second Coming:

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 133

7 Yea, verily I say unto you again, the time has come...Go ye out of Babylon; gather ye out from among the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 8 Send for the elders of my church unto the nations which are afar off; unto the islands of the sea; send forth unto foreign lands; call upon all nations, first upon the Gentiles, and then upon the Jews. 9 And behold...the voice of the Lord unto all people: Go ye forth unto the land of Zion, that the borders of my people may be enlarged...and that Zion may go forth unto the regions round about.

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus will be returning to Jerusalem. In the Christian faith, the "New Jerusalem" is not a city that is to be built here by the Lord's people, but is a city that will be seen descending from heaven when the Lord returns:

Revelation, Chapter 21*

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 10 And he carried me away in that spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

In addition to God preparing the new Jerusalem and not Latter-day Saints, the location for this city and His Kingdom rule on earth will be in Jerusalem, not Zion in Independence Missouri:

Zechariah 14:4*

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east...

Neither of these KJV citations were "corrected" by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired* Bible Version.

A "new Jerusalem" implies an improvement or replacement of the *old* Jerusalem. This Jerusalem is in the Middle East—not America. Christ is a Jew and He came initially for His chosen people—also Jews.

The word *Jerusalem* is specifically mentioned 729 times in the Bible.¹⁷² In comparison, the words *America, American, USA, Washington D.C., Missouri, Independence, or Jackson County*

172 *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, pp. 725-728

are mentioned exactly zero times in the Bible. That's because in the biblical purview of God, America's not the geographical center of His millennial kingdom.

The word Zion is specifically mentioned 153 times in the Bible. As you've probably guessed by now, not a single reference puts this place in North America—neither then, nor in the future. In fact, the word doesn't even appear in the entire New Testament. Strange that not a single New Testament Bible writer ever referred to the Show Me State. Perhaps that's because the *Zion* of today is in the Middle East (Jerusalem).¹⁷³ The future *Zion* is the heavenly Jerusalem, not earthly Missouri (Heb. 12:22).

Despite Joseph Smith's intent to make America the focus of the Second Coming, the center of the universe on that day will be the Middle East, not Independence Missouri. The Christian Lord says that He ". . .hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:13-14). You can be assured that this Zion of the Christian faith began in Jerusalem, and it will remain in Jerusalem!

There is also a big difference between the New Jerusalem in *D. & C. 84*, which is to be built in Missouri by the LDS and Lamanites and the New Jerusalem in Revelation, which descends from God out of heaven (Rev. 21:2,10,22). In *D&C 84*, the LDS build a temple in that "New Jerusalem." But Revelation says that New Jerusalem "*had no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it*" (Rev. 21:22).

Distinctive No. 24 — The Mormon Jesus does not accept prayers directly

Every prayer given by a Mormon is to be addressed to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. A Mormon teaching manual instructs LDS that "*We should pray to God and to no one else.*"¹⁷⁴ Mormon scripture records Christ affirming this restriction, saying "*Ye must always pray unto the Father in my name.*"¹⁷⁵

On March 2, 1982, Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie gave a devotional at *Brigham Young University* entitled, *Our Relationship with the Lord*. In that speech he referred to those who claim a personal relationship with Christ, and how it is never appropriate for them to pray directly to Jesus:

Those often begin to pray directly to Christ....Our Prayers are addressed to the Father, and to him only.¹⁷⁶

This prohibition no doubt stems from the Mormon belief that all three Persons of the Godhead are separate beings, with the Heavenly Father being the supreme God and literal biological

173 Ps. 147:12; Isa. 30:10; Joel 2:32

174 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 41

175 *Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 18:19

176 Bruce McConkie, *Our Relationship With The Lord*, pp. 19-20

Father over Christ and the Holy Ghost. To LDS then, praying to Christ is equivalent to praying to the second in command.

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus accepts prayers directly. It is true that nowhere in the Bible are we commanded to pray to Christ or the Holy Ghost. Admittedly there is no certain and direct evidence for praying to the Holy Spirit from the Bible. However, scripture does not forbid praying to any member of the Godhead. Consider some Biblical examples where prayer was given directly to Jesus:

Acts 7:59-60*

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge....

Romans 10:12*

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

The Apostle Paul asked Christ to remove his physical ailment in Second Corinthians. Not only did Jesus answer him, but He failed to correct Paul for inappropriately addressing his prayer to Christ instead of the Father.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9*

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

None of these KJV citations were "corrected" by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired* Bible Version.

While the Christian's prayers are indeed frequently directed to the Father, many prayers are also addressed to His Son Jesus, for it was the flesh and bones Son that dwelt among man for 33 years and provided a personal reflection of the qualities possessed by our Heavenly Father of spirit. This same Christ who requires a personal relationship for salvation and sanctification in our lives is also a Christ who would expect the Christian to pray to Him and nurture that relationship.

***** LDS Proof Texts *****

Exodus, Chapter 20

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God...

A Church teaching manual cites the first and second commandments in Exodus 20 to buttress why prayer should only go to the Heavenly Father and not to *“any other being or to anything made by man or God.”*¹⁷⁷ A few points to consider:

1. Verse three doesn't say thou shalt not “worship” other gods before me. It simply says that you will have no other gods before Him. This would include the separate Mormon Gods called Jesus, the Holy Ghost, and the pantheon of additional true Gods and are said to be as innumerable as the sands of every seashore. The “g” is not capitalized in *God* so as to reflect that there is only one true God anywhere. There is no conflict here for the triune God of the Christian faith, since both the Son and the Holy Ghost are the same one God in essence.
2. Verses four and five are referring to idols or human rulers and therefore the command not to *“bow down thyself to them, nor serve [worship] them”* is clearly not a prohibition against praying to Jesus or the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 6:9

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

LDS will point to the Model Prayer given by Jesus—after all, Jesus prayed to the Father. I guess the best question would be, could Jesus have prayed to Himself? Of course not. Could Jesus have prayed to the Holy Ghost? While there is no biblical restriction from doing so, the Father was the one who sent Jesus to earth to save sinners and thus was the one perhaps most responsible for the subject of His prayer.¹⁷⁸

The prayer of Christ in verses nine through thirteen is a model or example prayer and does not specifically require the believer to address all prayer to the Father. The Bible does indeed require Christians to close prayer in the name of Jesus, but one cannot be dogmatic in insisting prayer to the Father.

John 15:16

(See also John 16:23-24)

...whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

¹⁷⁷ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 41

¹⁷⁸ Matt. 10:40; Mk. 9:37; Lk. 9:48; Jn. 3:16-17; 5:24,36-38; 6:38-40

According to Latter-day Saints, this proves that prayer must be directed to God the Father. While the Father was the subject for this prayer, scripture does not conclusively exclude other members of the Godhead from receiving prayer. In fact, consider two other instructions for prayer that mention the Father and the name of Christ, but do not specifically mention the Father as the subject of the prayer:

John 14:13-14

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Note the difference in this passage. Jesus said in the previous quotation in John 15:16 that if you ask the Father, He (the Father) will do it. However, in John 14:13-14, Jesus says that if you ask in His name (Christ), He (Christ) will do it. No mention of asking the Father. While the Father could be the subject of this prayer, the scriptural context does not require it.

In another passage, Christ says that if you'll ask in His name (no mention of the subject of the prayer), He (Jesus) will pray to the Father for you:

John 16:26

At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.

Once again, while the Father could be the subject of this prayer, the scriptural context is not emphatic. Christ doesn't say that he'll pray *with* us or *for you also*, suggesting the Father as the prayer subject. Christ says He'll pray for us, suggesting intercessory prayer in our stead. In any case, there is no biblical support to restrict prayer to the first Person of the Godhead.

* * * LDS Scripture Contradiction * * *

Let's see if "the most correct of any book on earth"¹⁷⁹ agrees with Mormon doctrine that no prayer should go to Jesus:

Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi, Chapter 19

18 ...they did pray unto Jesus calling him their Lord and their God...30
And when Jesus had spoken these words he came again unto his disciples; and behold they did pray...unto him; and he did smile upon them...

Of significance with this passage is that the Mormon Jesus was with the disciples and the one who commanded them to pray. The Mormon Christ did not say who to pray to and when the disciples prayed to Him, He made no effort to correct their misguided supplications.

179 Book of Mormon, Introduction

Distinctive No. 25 — The Mormon Jesus refuses our worship

The Christ of Mormonism is not the one and only triune God of the Bible, but the oldest child of the Heavenly Father and our literal eldest brother. As such, even though the Mormon Christ is now a God, He will always hold a subordinate position to His creator—and our creator. Worshipping the Mormon Christ is once again equivalent to worshipping the second-in-command, which would be inappropriate since the Father is in charge.

During a March 2, 1982, devotional at *Brigham Young University* entitled, *Our Relationship With the Lord*, Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie taught that all worship should go to the Father:

We worship the Father and him only and no one else. We do not worship the Son and we do not worship the Holy Ghost. I know perfectly well what the scriptures say about worshipping Christ and Jehovah, but they are speaking in an entirely different sense--the sense of standing in awe and being reverentially grateful to Him who has redeemed us. Worship in the true and saving sense is reserved for God the first, the Creator.¹⁸⁰

One would almost think that McConkie suffered from a type of spiritual amnesia because his 1982 worship restriction came after he taught in his best known book 1979 book that it *is indeed appropriate* to worship Christ:

The Father and the Son are the objects of all true worship....No one can worship the Father without also worshipping the Son....It is proper to worship the Father, in the name of the Son, and also to worship the Son.¹⁸¹

Biblical Position

The Bible clearly supports worship being given to Jesus and there is no distinction made in the Greek when the word “worship” is used for God the Father or Christ.

Philippians 2:9-11*

9 Where God also hath highly exalted him [Christ], and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hebrews 1:6*

...when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him.

Neither of the KJV passages cited were corrected by Joseph Smith Jr. in his *Inspired Bible Version*.

180 Bruce McConkie, *Our Relationship With The Lord*, p. 5

181 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 848

***** LDS Scripture Contradictions *****

Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 11:17

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.

Speaking of Christ, Joseph Smith said that Jesus created man and said Himself that we are to worship Him:

Doctrine and Covenants 20:19

And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship.

Note here that not only does the Mormon Christ command worship, but He restricts all worship to Himself to the exclusion of the Father! How does this square with Mormon teaching that all true worship should go to the Father, with only respect and awe going to Jesus?

Distinctive No. 26 — The blood of the Mormon Jesus cleanses from only some sins

There are certain sins (apart from the unpardonable sin) that Mormons can commit that put them outside the atoning work of Christ. Such sins require the blood of the offender to be spilled and their lives to be taken if they are to have atonement for their wrongdoing. Whether the Mormon Christ is personally unable to save Latter-day Saints from these sins or simply chooses not to save them is not essential to this topic. What LDS should know, however, is that the LDS Christ may be unable to atone for their sins no matter how repentant they are and no matter how much they do to make amends.

The Blood Atonement

Early Mormon leadership taught a doctrine known as *blood atonement*, whereby certain sins and offenses were not redeemable through the blood of Christ alone but required the blood of the offenders to be shed by someone else to save them from their acts. No doubt many LDS have never heard of the blood atonement doctrine in early Mormonism because current instructional material ignores this history and modern Mormon leadership has been largely silent or not totally forthcoming with the facts. In fact, due to this embarrassing part of Mormonism's past, LDS leadership will commonly deny that such a doctrine ever existed in the Mormon Church. Let's listen to what past Mormon leadership has actually said and let you be the judge if early Mormonism taught blood atonement:

From the tenth Mormon Prophet and President, Joseph Fielding Smith:

Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them for their sins even though they repent. Therefore, their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible in their behalf. This is scriptural doctrine, and is taught in all the standard works of the Church.¹⁸²

The second Prophet and President of the Mormon Church, Brigham Young, actually taught that the killing of others was akin to "loving our neighbor as ourselves".

Supposed that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or women in this house but what would say, "shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the gods."

All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?

I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance . . . if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil. . . . I have known a great many men who have left this church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them. The wickedness and ignorance of the nations forbid this principle being in full force, but the time will come when the law of God will be in full force.

This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind.¹⁸³

With a loving neighbor like Brigham Young, who needs an enemy? Mormon Apostle Heber C Kimball taught LDS that their willingness to execute blood atonement should come as second nature:

...When it is necessary that blood should be shed, we should be as ready to do that as to eat an apple...we will let you know that the earth can swallow you up, as it did Korah with his host; and as brother Taylor says, you may dig your graves, and we will slay you, and you may crawl into them.¹⁸⁴

182 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 133

183 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, pp. 219-220

184 Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 6, pp. 34-35

Clearly an objective reader will conclude that Mormonism did indeed teach the need for killing to atone for sins beyond the reach of the blood of Christ. Exactly what infractions were worthy of blood atonement?

1. Murder cannot be forgiven by the Mormon Christ.

First LDS Prophet and President Joseph Smith Jr. identified the murderer as beyond the reach of the salvation of Christ:

A murderer, for instance, one that sheds innocent blood, cannot have forgiveness. David sought repentance at the hand of God carefully with tears, for the murder of Uriah; but he could only get it through hell: he got a promise that his soul should not be left in hell.¹⁸⁵

Smith taught that bloodletting for such perpetrators was preferred over imprisonment:

In debate, George A. Smith said imprisonment was better than hanging. I replied, I was opposed to hanging, even if a man kill another. I will shoot him or cut off his head, spill his blood on the ground, and let the smoke thereof ascend up to God.¹⁸⁶

Tenth Mormon Prophet and President Joseph Fielding Smith saw the value in criminals choosing death by bloodletting, as the spilling of blood was needed to gain atonement:

...the founders of Utah incorporated in the laws of the Territory provisions for the capital punishment of those who willfully shed the blood of their fellow men. This law, which is now the law of the State, granted unto the condemned murderer the privilege of choosing for himself whether he die by hanging, or whether he be shot and thus have his blood shed in harmony with the law of God; and thus atone, so far as it is in his power to atone, for the death of his victim. Almost without exception the condemned party chooses the latter death.¹⁸⁷

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie identified murder as an unforgivable sin:

But under certain circumstances there are serious sins for which the cleansing of Christ does not operate, and the law of God is that men must then have their own blood shed to atone for their sins. Murder, for instance, is one of these sins; hence we find the Lord commanding capital punishment.¹⁸⁸

2. Adultery cannot be forgiven by the Mormon Christ.

Several other LDS authorities have confirmed blood atonement for adultery, as McConkie already mentioned in the previous quote. From the top, second Mormon Prophet and President Brigham Young taught that it was lawful to take the law into your own hands and run the spear through the capital crime of adultery:

185 Joseph Smith Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 339

186 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 296

187 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 136

188 Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 92

Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands....There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it...¹⁸⁹

Mormon Apostle George A. Smith confirmed the right and imperative of vengeance at the hands of the offended party:

The man who seduces his neighbor's wife must die, and her nearest relative must kill him.¹⁹⁰

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt said:

The people of Utah are the only ones in this nation who have taken effectual measure. . . to prevent adulteries and criminal connection between sexes. The punishment in that territory for these crimes is death to both male and female. And this law is written on the hearts and printed in the thoughts of the whole people.¹⁹¹

LDS Apostle Heber C. Kimball spoke on the issue several times, including endorsement of decapitation for the capital crime of adultery:

But they cannot whore it here; for, gentlemen, if there is anything of that kind, we will slay both men and women. We will do it, as the Lord liveth—we will slay such characters. Now, which would be the most worthy to be slain—the woman that had had her endowments and made certain covenants before God, or the man that knew nothing about it? The woman, of course.¹⁹²

...our females...are not unclean, for we wipe all unclean ones from our midst: we not only wipe them from our streets, but we wipe them out of existence...so help me God, while I live, I will lend my hand to wipe such persons out: and I know this people will.¹⁹³

These are my views, and the Lord knows that I believe in the principles of sanctification; and when I am guilty of seducing any man's wife, or any woman in God's world, I say, sever my head from my body.¹⁹⁴

3. Theft cannot be forgiven by the Mormon Christ.

The high crime of thievery was a capital offense in the minds of some LDS leadership. Second Mormon Prophet and President Brigham Young lamented:

189 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, p. 247

190 George A. Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p. 97

191 Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 223

192 Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 6, p. 38

193 Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 19

194 Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 20

If you want to know what to do with a thief, that you may find stealing, I say kill him on the spot and never suffer him to commit another iniquity. If you will cause all those whom you know to be thieves, to be placed in a line before the mouth of one of our largest cannon, well loaded with chain shot, I will prove by my works whether I can mete out justice to such persons, or not. I would consider it just as much my duty to do that as to baptize a man for the remission of his sins.¹⁹⁵

President Young then spoke against thieving,...said he, I should be perfectly willing to see thieves have their throats cut...¹⁹⁶

LDS Apostle Orson Hyde not only knew that killing thieves would be pleasing in the sight of the Lord but saw the terror and shock effect benefits gained by blood atoning violators in public:

It would have a tendency to place a terror on those who leave these parts, that may prove their salvation when they see the heads of thieves taken off, or shot down before the public...I believe it to be pleasing in the sight of heaven to sanctify ourselves and put these things from our midst.¹⁹⁷

4. Rejection or lukewarm receipt of the LDS gospel cannot be forgiven by the Mormon Christ.

Second Mormon President and Prophet Brigham Young prepared the saints for the coming time where they were to cut down those who didn't answer affirmatively to their acceptance of God:

The time is coming when justice will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet; when we shall ask "Are you for God?" and if you are not heartily on the Lord's side, you will be hewn down.¹⁹⁸

Lest LDS interpret this event as the second coming of Christ, it is worth noting that the Bible says that it is Christ and his mighty angels (not us) that will come "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God..." (2 Thess. 1:7-9; 9:15; chapt. 16; 19:11-15)

5. Marriage to an African descendant cannot be forgiven by the Mormon Christ.

Stemming from the official anti-black doctrine of Mormonism, LDS Prophet Brigham Young warned that anyone marrying a black person was to be dropped and atoned where they stood:

Shall I tell you the Law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain the penalty, under the Law of God is death on the spot. This will always be so.¹⁹⁹

195 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, pp. 108-109

196 Brigham Young, *History of the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 597

197 Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p. 73

198 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, p. 226

199 Ibid., Vol. 10, p. 110

6. Apostacy cannot be forgiven by the Mormon Christ.

Brigham Young had enthusiastic support from the brethren as he evoked the blessing of God to bring the knives to bear against those committing the capital offense of rebelling against the Mormon Church:

I say, rather than that apostates should flourish here, I will unsheathe my bowie knife and conquer or die. (Great commotion in the congregation, and a simultaneous burst of feeling, assenting to the declaration.) Now, you nasty apostates, clear out, or judgment will be put to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. (Voices, generally, 'go it, go it.') If you say it is right, raise your hands. (All hands up.) Let us call upon the Lord to assist us in this, and every good work.²⁰⁰

7. Covenant breakers cannot be forgiven by the Mormon Christ.

Second Mormon Prophet and President Brigham Young explains the limits of the blood of Christ:

There is not a man or woman, who violates covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay their debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out. Your own blood must atone for it.²⁰¹

Mormon Apostle Heber C. Kimball targeted covenant breakers for bloodletting:

...if men turn traitors to God and His servants, their blood will surely be shed, or else they will be damned, and that too according to their covenants.²⁰²

Mormon Seventy Jedediah M. Grant exercised foresight in identifying a place where the blood of covenant breakers could flow as a sacrifice for God, presumably in public view so that "sinners in Zion [Utah] may be afraid" from the justice of the brethren:

We have those amongst us that are full of all manner of abominations, those who need to have their blood shed...and if they are covenant breakers we need a place designated, where we can shed their blood. ...I go for letting the sword of the Almighty be unsheathed, not only in word, but in deed...you who have committed sins that cannot be forgiven through baptism, let your blood be shed, and let the smoke ascend, that the incense thereof may come up before God as an atonement for your sins, and that the sinners in Zion may be afraid.²⁰³

It should be apparent now that the shed blood and atoning work of the Mormon Christ has many limitations. It is indeed a frightful thought to consider the actions early Mormon leadership was encouraging in the name of God for such capital crimes ranging from murder to stealing or

200 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p. 83

201 Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 247

202 Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, p. 375

203 Jedediah M. Grant, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, pp. 49-51

simply marrying an African American. At one time in Mormon history, LDS brethren thundered forth from the great Salt Lake tabernacle the righteous duty to engage in blood spilling by head lopping, firing squads and cannon chain shot, running through with javelins, swords, and bowie knives, and throat cutting. Such justice was to be carried out on the spot by citizens and in public view to terrorize all those who would commit such infractions. Such Christian activity was actually presented as pleasing unto God and the best way to love yourself and your neighbor, atoning them of their sins that Christ could not or would not cleanse.

*** * * LDS Rebuttals * * ***

Naturally LDS leadership readily distances itself from the pronouncements of those considered infallible prophets of God. Perhaps the best way to absolve any responsibility for these statements is to deny that they were ever taught, or to accuse non-LDS apologists of context twisting. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie employed this technique:

LDS Rebuttal:

From the days of Joseph Smith to the present, wicked and evilly-disposed persons have fabricated false and slanderous stories to the effect that the Church, in the early days of this dispensation, engaged in a practice of *blood atonement* whereunder the blood of apostates and others was shed by the Church as an atonement for their sins. These claims are false and were known by their originators to be false. There is not one historical instance of so-called blood atonement in this dispensation, nor has there been one event or occurrence whatever, of any nature, from which the slightest inference arises that any such practice either existed or was taught.

There are, however, in the sermons of some of the early church leaders some statements about the true doctrine of blood atonement and of its practice in past dispensations, for instance, in the days of Moses. By taking one sentence on one page and another from a succeeding page and even by taking a part of a sentence on one page and a part of another found several pages away—all wholly torn from context—dishonest persons have attempted to make it appear that Brigham Young and others taught things just the opposite of what they really believed and taught.²⁰⁴

McConkie's denial is immediately weakened when he tries to play both sides of the fence. It should be noted that while he's busy denying blood atonement he also writes on the very same page in his book that such punishment *is indeed allowed* for some grave sins:

...under certain circumstances there are some serious sins for which the cleansing of Christ does not operate, and the law of God is that men must then have their own blood shed to atone for their sins. Murder, for instance, is one of these sins; hence we find the Lord commanding capital punishment.²⁰⁵

204 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 92

205 Ibid., p. 92

Let's unpack McConkie's official denial point by point:

1. "These claims are false and were known by their originators to be false" and not the " slightest inference arises that any such practice either existed or was taught."

This whopper stands is stark denial of the abundance of quotations just provided and corroborated by several layers of Mormon authorities. Each utterance has been clearly presented in context and LDS are encouraged to verify the context themselves from source documents. Objective readers will have to draw their own conclusions, but this author and many others have concluded that Mormonism has indeed taught righteous bloodletting for many offenses.

The remnants of blood atonement is in fact still found in Mormon Scripture to this day but can be easily overlooked by those not aware of the historical teaching of early Mormon leadership:

Doctrine and Covenants 132:26

Verily, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife according to my word, and they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, according to mine appointment and he or she shall commit any sin or transgression of the new and everlasting covenant whatever . . . they shall be destroyed in the flesh.

The new and everlasting covenant mentioned here speaks specifically to the Mormon commandment for men to marry multiple wives. Several additional verses in this chapter demand that Mormon females who are married to their polygamous husbands are to "be destroyed" if found in the offense of adultery.²⁰⁶ Until this LDS chapter is purged or changed it continues to stand this day as evidence of the blood atonement teaching of Mormonism.

The blood atonement legacy of early Mormonism can still be seen today in the capital punishment law of Utah, which is headquarters for the Mormon Church. Utah is the only state in the union that still allows convicted criminals on death row to choose death by firing squad. Of course, this is the only method of capital punishment that accommodates the spilling of the perpetrator's blood, therefore atoning for their sins.

While it does not happen often at this time, the execution of two convicted murderers in Utah in 2003 drew national attention when they exercised their right to death by firing squad.²⁰⁷ The state of Idaho—which also enjoys a large percentage of LDS—allows the firing squad but only after all other methods are unavailable and there is no option given to the inmates.

LDS should know that previously candid teaching by one Mormon Apostle has been expunged by the Mormon Church in an effort to deny past blood atonement teaching. The first 1958 edition of Bruce R. McConkie's well known book entitled *Mormon Doctrine* said this:

206 Doctrine and Covenants 132:41,52,54,63,64

207 As reported by the Fox News Channel, *The Big Story with John Gibson*, May 27, 2003

As a mode of capital punishment, hanging or execution on a gallows does not comply with the law of blood atonement, for the blood is not shed.²⁰⁸

The second and current 1979 edition has purged this candid acknowledgement of the Mormon teaching.

2. “There is not one historical instance of...blood atonement in this dispensation.”

This too is not factually accurate, but most LDS would never know it since they are discouraged from reading unofficial or non-LDS material and Mormon leadership is not going to teach potentially faith-damaging history to their membership.

McConkie’s denial here is beyond the scope of this article, but there is sufficient evidence available in first person accounts to convince most objective readers that blood atonement indeed was practiced in early Mormonism and was not only known of but in some cases approved by Mormon bishops councils.

Once good source comes from a former Mormon within Brigham Young’s inner circle that was blood atoned himself as a scapegoat for the *Mountain Meadows Massacre* where Indians and Mormons murdered innocent men, women, and children who were passing through Utah in a wagon train. In his book written before his death by firing squad (thus spilling his blood), John D. Lee wrote:

I knew of many men being killed in Nauvoo... and I know of many a man who was quietly put out of the way by the orders of Joseph and his Apostles while the Church was there.²⁰⁹

3. “There are...in the sermons of some of the early church leaders some statements about the true doctrine of blood atonement and of its practice in past dispensations...”

This attempt to pitch LDS bloodletting back to Old Testament times simply doesn’t reflect reality. As we’ve already demonstrated, the quotes previously provided in this section were clearly given in the context of the Mormon church as it then existed in the 1800’s. The *Doctrine and Covenants* still contains blood atonement authorization for adultery and at least one modern-day LDS prophet (Bruce R. McConkie) admitted as recently as his 1979 book of Mormon Doctrine that “*Murder, for instance, is one of these sins...*”

208 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1958 ed., p. 314

209 John D. Lee, *Confessions of John D. Lee*, photo-reprint of 1877 ed., p. 284

Biblical Position:

The blood of the Christian Jesus cleanses from all sin.

1 John 1:7*

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 John 1:9*

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Neither of the KJV citations was corrected by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired* Bible Version. Once again, faithful LDS have a choice to make since the prophets of Mormonism and the Jesus Christ of the Bible are not teaching the same thing. The Bible plainly presents a Christ who not only able but is willing to atone and save anyone from any sin if he truly repents of his wicked ways and asks for salvation in faith. There is no sin beyond the wonder working power of His blood.

Distinctive No. 27 — The Mormon Jesus requires works for eternal life

The topic of grace, works, and eternal life is beyond the scope of this article, but we'll review just a few pertinent evidences that the Christ of Mormonism requires vicarious and lasting effort on the part of His followers if they are to be granted eternal life:

Doctrine and Covenants 18:22

And as many as repent and are baptized in my name, which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved.

Doctrine and Covenants 14:7

And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 25:23

...it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

Mormon leadership has over and over again affirmed that the Christ of Mormonism does not save by grace through faith, but requires His atonement to be matched by the good works of His believers. We'll review just one leadership quote in this chapter. Twelfth Mormon President and Prophet Spencer Woolley Kimball exclaimed a works demanding Christ:

One of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation.²¹⁰

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus requires faith alone for eternal life. Common LDS proof texts, rebuttals, as well as LDS scriptural contradictions are presented in that chapter as well and will not be repeated here.

For purposes of this chapter, we will simply defer to the plain teaching of the Bible and determine if the Christ of Mormonism is saying the same thing that the Christ of the Bible is:

Ephesians, Chapter 2*

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

This is the most clear and succinct sentence in the whole Bible on the futility of trusting in works to save your soul. It is so clear that the only way to miss its unambiguous meaning is to willingly choose not to accept it. Mormonism does this by redefining what “saved” is, and by putting words in Christ’s mouth, claiming that grace is something we receive “after all we can do.”

Despite the scriptural wordsmithing in LDS scripture, however, Ephesians 2:8—or any other Bible verse for that matter—does not include this self-contradictory phrase used in the Book of Mormon. Grace is what does the saving for a Christ—not works. Referred to in scripture as a “gift,” (Rom. 5:12-19) biblical grace is the free and unmerited favor or mercy that God extends to us when he saves us. How simple a truth, but a Mormon will not accept this free gift without including his good works.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The Christ of Mormonism requires works for eternal life. The Christ of the Bible requires faith in Him for eternal life. Which Christ is right?

Romans 10:9

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

None of these KJV citations were "corrected" by Joseph Smith in his *Inspired* Bible Version.

210 Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 206-207

Many more biblical proofs could be given, but we'll stop here. Mormons reading this may be thinking "We believe in grace too," or "We can't save ourselves with our works alone, but still need to partner with Christ's grace."

The deadly flaw in this reasoning is that salvation by "grace" and salvation by "grace and works" are not only incompatible, but are self-defeating (Rom. 11:6). Biblical salvation cannot be any combination of grace and works, not even 99.9% grace and 0.1% works. Insistence by Latter-day Saints to add works to the grace of Christ effectively nullifies the atoning work of grace altogether and puts the worker under a curse (Gal. 5:1-6; 3:10).

When Jesus said "It is finished" before giving up the Ghost on the cross, He was making a very important statement. This statement was sometimes placed on the bottom of an invoice in ancient days to indicate that a debtor's debts had all been paid. With this in mind, the Christian Jesus was in effect saying, "I have paid your entire sin debt. There is no more payment to be made."

How different this is from the Christ we see of Mormonism. While the Mormon Jesus paid our debt in part, the Christian Jesus paid our debt in full.

Distinctive No. 28 — The Mormon Jesus didn't give eternal life to the thief on the cross

As a result of the works-based salvation system of the Mormonism and the universal salvation of all people into lower heavens, the Mormon Christ on mount Calvary could not grant eternal life to the repentant thief on the cross. Instead, the Mormon Christ offered Him admittance into paradise, where the Mormon gospel would be taught to him, and he would be afforded the opportunity to accept it. Then once a Mormon was baptized for him by proxy in a Mormon temple, he would be able to receive one of the lower two heavens on resurrection day.

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie confirms that the Mormon Jesus only offered the thief the chance to accept the Mormon gospel after his death:

"To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43), is a statement our Lord is purported to have made to the thief on the cross. Actually, as the Prophet explains, "there is nothing in the original word in Greek from which this was taken that signifies paradise; but it was—This day shalt thou be with me in the world of spirits: then I will teach you all about it and answer your inquiries...meaning of course, that such teaching and answers would be given, as is nearly always the case, by the mouths of his servants appointed so to serve.²¹¹

211 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 555

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus unconditionally saved the thief on the cross. For the saved, “*to be absent from the body*” is “*to be present with the Lord*” (2 Cor. 5:8). It is Heaven where Christ dwells, in the presence of the Father (Mk. 16:19; Acts 7:55). And so, it is today that the thief who asked to be with the Mormon Christ got more than a seat in a paradise school-room to learn the gospel and wait for his baptism by proxy—the thief on the cross got eternal life and an eternal home with Christ forever.

Distinctive No. 29 — The Mormon Jesus promises "fire protection" for tithe payers

Mormon scripture gives a verify specific benefit for all who contribute tithes to the Mormon Church:

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 64

23 ...he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming. 24 For after today cometh the burning—this is speaking after the manner of the Lord—for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up...

This tithing incentive is affirmed in other official LDS teaching material and is given in the context of a promise to Christians.²¹²

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus will rapture His children to safety. The God of the Bible promises blessing and protection from the Devil for those who tithe, but says nothing about fire protection for the faithful (Mal. 3:7-11). For every saved child of God, the anticipated rapture event during the second coming makes any concern (or promise) about fire protection irrelevant. We won't be dodging flaming comets and molten lava. We'll be immediately raised up to meet the Lord:

1 Thessalonians, Chapter 4

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

We're told elsewhere in the Bible that this translation of the saved happens “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:5). Flames or no flames, Christians will shoot through the air with their changed and incorruptible bodies. Fire will have no effect to the elect.

²¹² The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, 1997 ed., p. 210

If the saved in Christ will not be burned, then what about the lost? The Bible mentions nothing about tithe paying dues to keep the unregenerate cool amongst the flames. Most certainly the lost, the wicked and those who spurned and mocked the gospel of Christ will endure an entirely different ending:

2 Thessalonians, Chapter 1

7...the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,
8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that
obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The God of the Christian faith is no respecter of persons, tithe payer or not (Rom. 2:11). All who remain on this orb as an unrepentant rebel against the gospel of Christ, then you will be exposed to the same calamity that every other person will experience. Indeed, it makes no sense for the true Christ to offer earthly fire protection for the lost during His second coming, only to drop them “into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 19:20). The only celestial State Farm insurance policies available are for saved believers in Christ.

CONCLUSION

In view of the twenty-nine differences presented in this series, consider a biographical summary of the Mormon Jesus. He's a totally separate and independent God, existing among countless others. He's been created as the result of a physical union between a spirit-embodied Father God and Mother God in heaven. After being carried to term and delivered in heaven by His Heavenly Mother, he learned from the Father and eventually became a God himself.

He's a Christ who dwelt in heaven along with us and Satan, His literal brothers—also born from the Heavenly Father. He's a Christ who arrived on earth through a sexual union between the Heavenly Father and Mary, yet is somehow considered virgin born. His birthplace is in contention—could be Jerusalem if you believe the *Book of Mormon*, or could be Bethlehem if you believe the Bible and several Mormon spokesmen. While living on earth he was a Jesus who was married, exemplified a polygamist lifestyle, and sired his own children from His many wives.

He's a Christ who while a God himself, still had to work out His own salvation during His earthly ministry, yet was sinless enough to atone for your sins. He atoned for your sins in a garden and requires vicarious life-long works if He is to grant you eternal life—and only then if you don't commit any of the sins that are beyond His atoning ability. After His Jerusalem ascension he's known to have gone on a multi-continent evangelistic church-planting campaign, including a visit to our American Indians.

He's a Christ presented as all-powerful, yet he exists among countless other "omnipotent" Mormon Gods who thus far haven't challenged him. In his boundless power, he still couldn't create anything out of nothing, including your own body or soul, nor could he assure that all the prophecies he made would come to pass.

He's a Christ worshipped as all-knowing, yet he was unable to predict the death and excommunications of men he empowered and lauded as exemplars of his restored Church which was contending against the whole of apostate Christianity. He's a Jesus presented to man as unchanging, but has had to react to sinful men by reversing, revising, or suspending several of His eternal, "everlasting" covenants.

In short, he's a Christ of our very own race and species, differing only in his degree of advancement. If we join the Mormon Church and faithfully adhere to his gospel, we too can advance to the ranks of Deity that he has earned.

Mormon reader, could this be the very same Jesus of the Bible and the Christian faith? Are the differences mostly superficial, peripheral, or secondary in manner? This former Mormon has determined that the divide is indeed wide, and the essential nature of many differences are simply irreconcilable. Just one characteristic alone, such as a Mormon Christ who requires works for salvation, is enough to miss a home eternally and irreversibly in heaven with Jesus and lose your sole in following a counterfeit. It's not enough to call yourself Christ—you have to follow the true Christ that gives that title meaning. You should soberly consider whether the true Christ of the Bible will recognize Latter-day Saints, who are calling and trusting upon a different Jesus?

For the Christian, the Bible is our authoritative guide and is the Christian standard or spiritual "plumb line" that all essential matters of Christology must conform to:

2 Corinthians 11:4

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

To "bear with him" means that you should fully or honestly hold yourself up against such a person if they do not affirm what the Apostles taught about Jesus. The Bible says to check the message of all teachers against what *has already been preached* by the first-century eye-witness apostles of Christ. The message is not new. The program has not changed.

This series has compared the Mormon Jesus against Bible teaching and unless Christ has a body-double or a split personality, Mormonism leadership "*preacheth another Jesus.*" Either the Bible apostles or the modern-day apostles of Mormonism are wrong, for things that are different are not the same.

The skeptical Mormon may be reading this and thinking, “So there are differences...so what? The Prophet has revealed the true Christ to us.” Are Mormons and Christians really following the same historical Person? Are a few wrong ideas about this God or Christ really a problem?

The answer to this question should be obvious in light of Bible warnings, but since LDS do not accept the Bible as the final word and do not accept Christians as having the authority to interpret scripture if it disagrees with Mormonism, let's let official oracles of the Mormon Church do the talking regarding the consequences for those who espouse a false view of Christ. Mormon Seventy Bernard P. Brockbank said during a talk entitled “The Living Christ”:

It is true that many of the Christian churches worship a different Jesus Christ than is worshipped by the Mormons or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For example from the Church of England's Articles of Religion, article one, I quote: 'There is but one living God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions....' We cannot obtain salvation and eternal life by worshipping fake Christs....The belief that God has no body parts, and passions is not a doctrine of Jesus Christ or a doctrine of the holy scriptures but is a doctrine of men, and to worship such a God is in vain.²¹³

Notice that the Mormon cannot obtain either “salvation” or “eternal life.” That covers all three Mormon kingdoms of heaven. What's left besides eternity eternally separated from God? Friend, if words mean things in Mormonism and such false worship is done “in vain,” then what basis will the Mormon have to earn admittance into heaven?

Bill Young, former LDS

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²¹³ Bernard P. Brockbank, *Ensign* magazine, May 1977 ed., pp. 26-27)