**Lightning Apologetics**

**Mormonism – Part V**

I’ve had such a wonderful response to the articles on Mormonism that I have decided to continue with them for this week and the next. We’ve gone into the theological differences between Christianity and Mormonism. I would like to shed a little more light on the history of Mormonism if I may. It’s important to understand the roots of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Mormons continue to be surprised and dismayed when people challenge their “Christianity.” In conversations with Mormon missionaries who come to my door I get the following:

*“We are followers of Jesus Christ. We do accept him as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. We do worship him. We study his life. We try to emulate the way he lived and be Christ-like in our behavior.*

*Our doctrines may differ a little bit from those of Roman Catholics, Protestants and Eastern Orthodox, but the central theme is the same.”*

Although the central theme is definitely not the same, as I have shown in the past four articles, this sleight-of-hand approach has been successful, demonstrated by the impressive efforts of the LDS to convince folks that Mormons are just as Christian as Baptists, Methodists, Russian Orthodox, and Catholics. Much of that success has resulted from television and newspaper ads touting “another Testament of Jesus Christ,” the Book of Mormon, which we have not spoken of much yet. The LDS has done a masterful job of taking orthodox, historical terminology and using it in completely unorthodox, unhistorical ways as I have shown. With no actual supernatural authority, nor any roots in ancient history, the LDS sect has relied on emotional appeals, family ties, and numerous revisions of key theological terms and historical facts. In fact, the entire story of Mormon theology is one of convenience, beginning with the teachings, revisions, clarifications, and re-revisions of the “prophet” Joseph Smith and continuing to this day in official Mormon doctrine.

What is strikingly similar about Joseph Smith nearly two centuries ago and the LDS sect today are the competing desires to be the one true church *and* to be accepted by society at large as normal, God-fearing Christians. On one hand Mormons teach and believe that all other Christians are not truly Christian, but are apostates; on the other they lament that other Christians do not accept and respect the LDS as Christian. This incoherence is evident with Mormon’s pleas for respect and acceptance, but then matter-of-factly explains that Mormons are the only true Christians.

Mormons believe, according to LaMar Sleight, a spokesman for the church’s Northeast region many years ago, that: “The church of the early saints—all early Christians were called saints-was restored after God and Jesus appeared to Smith in 1820 in a grove near the family farm in Palmyra, N.Y. Smith, a teen-ager trying to decide which faith to follow during a period of heated revivalism, said he was told to join none of the sects because “all their creeds were an abomination in God’s sight.” However much the LDS sect massages its doctrinal language, it continues to be open about its belief in “the Apostasy” since this tenet is the singular claim to authority it possesses. The official LDS website states:

*“Having been lost because of the apostasy, Christ’s church and the fullness of His gospel needed to be restored to the earth. This restoration would make available the opportunity for all to receive once again all of the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith’s First Vision marked the beginning of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. In subsequent years, Christ restored His priesthood and reorganized His Church. He has continued to reveal truths to His prophets and to restore the blessings that were taken from the earth for a time.”*

Next week we will discuss the “angel” Moroni, who appeared to Joseph Smith and gave him the tablets to be translated from reformed Egyptian. Trouble is, there is no such thing as reformed Egyptian. We will also speak of Mormonism’s “Baptism of the Dead and the fate of Joseph Smith. God bless you. Phillip