

# ARE LATTER-DAY SAINTS CHRISTIAN?

by Michael Hickenbotham

Some critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints contend that members of the Church are not really Christians. Their reasons, though accepted by some, are in reality faulty and based on erroneous assumptions.

The *Random House American College Dictionary* defines a Christian as “believing in or belonging to the religion of Jesus Christ, exhibiting a spirit proper to a follower of Jesus Christ (i.e., Christ-like), one who believes in Jesus Christ, an adherent of Christianity, or one who exemplifies in his life the teachings of Christ.” Though somewhat broad, none of these definitions exclude Latter-day Saints and technically any one of them should qualify the LDS as Christians.

In addition, the *Cambridge Bible Dictionary* informs us that the title Christian was “a name first given to believers in Jesus Christ.” It is believed that this name was first used by pagans in Antioch to identify those who followed Christ, much as the nickname “Mormon” is used to identify members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today. Interestingly, the *Cambridge Bible Dictionary* also adds “in the first years of the Church, believers were known among themselves as the brethren, the disciples, the saints, the faithful, and the elect.” The title *brethren*, for example, is used over five hundred times in the King James Bible; *disciple* or *disciples* is used over 350 times; *saint* or *saints* is used over one hundred times; *faithful* is used in reference to his servants over fifty times and *elect* is used twenty times. By contrast, the words *Christian* or *Christians* is used only three times throughout the entire Bible.<sup>1</sup> It is probably not a coincidence that the former titles also seem to be preferred in modern LDS revelation and among the Latter-day Saints themselves. The official name of the Church, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” was given by revelation<sup>2</sup> and contains both the title *saints* and most importantly the name *Jesus Christ*. Unlike many modern churches, the LDS Church identifies itself first and foremost as being the Church of Jesus

Christ. It is not named after any reformer, founder, or Bible principle. The title conforms to Paul’s teaching that Christ’s church should be associated not with men but with Christ.<sup>3</sup>

## THE BOOK OF MORMON IS A CHRISTIAN BOOK

The Book of Mormon, which Latter-day Saints consider to be scripture just like the Bible, qualifies as a profoundly “Christian” book. The Book of Mormon itself claims in its title page that it is another witness that Jesus is the Christ and was written to lead men to Him. In this regard, Joseph Fielding McConkie has stated, “The Book of Mormon has no peer in teaching the doctrines of the fall, the atonement, and the need for a redeemer. The clarity with which it testifies that Jesus is the Christ is unmatched in any other scriptural record.”<sup>4</sup> One author noted that, “the Book of Mormon has 476 references to the Lord Jesus Christ by name. With 531 pages in the text of the 1981 LDS edition, that averages nearly one reference per page. Of all the other Christian scriptures, only the Gospels...have more references to him by name.”<sup>5</sup> When all references to Deity are considered in the Book of Mormon and the New Testament, we find that the Book of Mormon has more references to the Lord despite the fact that it has 1,349 fewer verses. Only 30 of 531 pages in the Book of Mormon contain no specific name reference to Deity and the book of Moroni alone contains 215 references to Christ.<sup>6</sup> Truly the Book of Mormon is another witness of Christ. The following verses illustrate the clarity of that witness:



We labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, ...we believe in Christ, because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments. And we talk of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for the

remission of their sins...the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not...wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul.<sup>7</sup>

Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest... Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger, but that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world.<sup>8</sup>

## LDS LEADERS AND SCHOLARS ADDRESS BEING CHRISTIAN

Joseph Smith, when asked what the fundamental principles of Mormonism were, responded: “the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”<sup>9</sup> We believe that the lives of Latter-day Saints should exemplify Christian faith. As Brigham Young stated, “If we are not Christlike we are not Christian.”<sup>10</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson taught:

The fundamental principle of our religion is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ... Faith in Him is more than mere acknowledgment that He lives. It is more than professing belief. Faith in Jesus Christ consists in complete reliance on Him... His gospel is the perfect prescription for all human problems and social ills. But His gospel is only effective as it is applied in our lives... Unless we do His teachings, we do not demonstrate faith in Him.<sup>11</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball said, “There can be no real and true Christianity, even with good works, unless we are deeply and personally committed to the reality of Jesus Christ as the Only Begotten Son of the Father who bought us, who purchased us in the great act of Atonement”<sup>12</sup>

Daniel Peterson and Stephen Ricks observed that:

There is, after all, something rather peculiar about the assertion that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not Christian. It is not a self-evident truth, and would even seem

to contradict obvious fact. (This is presumably why it is so frequently announced with an air of breathless discovery.) Mormons declare themselves Christian, and are astonished to be told that they are not. They belong to a Church in which every prayer is uttered, every sermon is given, and every ordinance is performed literally in the name of Jesus Christ. Their hymns—the devotional heart of their Sunday worship—sing of Christ and his atonement. At Christmas and Easter, they join with hundreds of millions of Christians around the world in a celebration of his life. In baptism and in the weekly communion they know as “the sacrament,” they testify that they are willing to take upon them his name (D&C 20:37, 77). Their first Article of Faith announces their belief in “God the Eternal Father, and in His son, Jesus Christ.” The Book of Mormon closes with an exhortation to “come unto Christ and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32). One of the high points of the Doctrine and Covenants is a stirring testimony of Jesus (D&C 76:22–24). Their story begins with the claim of a young boy to have seen the Father and the Son. That young boy later claimed to be a prophet, defining “the spirit of prophecy” as “the testimony of Jesus”. His successors, likewise regarded as prophets, are assisted by a presiding quorum of “Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23).<sup>13</sup>

## BELIEFS AS A LITMUS TEST FOR BEING CHRISTIAN

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, though unique in some of their beliefs are, by standard definitions, undeniably Christian. A few excerpts from our church’s Articles of Faith should illustrate this:

- We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
- We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
- We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

- We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.
- We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.
- We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.
- We believe... that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.
- We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.
- We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

Critics of the LDS Church have taken it upon themselves to narrowly define a Christian as one who accepts “orthodox” beliefs that they then specify. These usually include extrapolated doctrines such as: belief in the Trinity, salvation solely by grace, Bible inerrancy, and others beliefs derived from but not specifically taught in the Bible. They also cite unique Mormon beliefs such as man’s potential for Godhood, Christ’s relationship to us and to Satan, the three degrees of glory, modern scripture, etc., describing them as heretical and cultic, even though these LDS concepts can also be found in or extrapolated from Bible scripture. Their conclusions are, of course, based on the assumption that their doctrines are “orthodox” when judged by Christ’s original teachings. Modern Christian religions have arrived at these mistaken beliefs as a result of misinterpretations of scripture. This premise is unthinkable to our critics, but can be shown through a careful and unbiased study of Christian history and scripture.

It is important to note that using some “orthodox beliefs” as criteria for being “Christian” would disqualify all Christians during the time of Christ and for nearly three centuries afterward. Beliefs such as: a three-in-one

Trinity, infant baptism, baptism by sprinkling, asceticism, celibacy, monasticism, abstaining from meats, transubstantiation, denial of continued revelation, the worship of Mary and chosen saints, the intercession of martyrs and saints, the sign of the cross, the immaculate conception, the doctrine of original sin, supererogation (the transfer of surplus good works), indulgences, infallibility, penance, passing the collection plate, pardons, and salvation without works were all introduced much later and were contrary to mainstream Christian thought in the early church. LDS beliefs in these areas are indeed closer to the teachings of the first Fathers and the beliefs of the early Christian church than those of modern orthodoxy.<sup>14</sup>

## BIBLICAL TESTS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

In ages past, many of those who rejected Jesus as the Christ did so while professing a great love for the scriptures and a loyalty to the prophets of ages past. Today, many who criticize LDS beliefs selectively cite scripture as evidence for their own creeds but ignore some obvious tests given in the Bible. We would do well to consider some of these tests for true discipleship.

**Test 1.** Jesus spoke of both true and false prophets in the latter days but cautioned that true prophets could be identified from false ones by their fruit.<sup>15</sup> The fruit of LDS prophets and the LDS Church are:

1. A strong faith in God and his Son, Jesus Christ, and their divinity<sup>16</sup>
2. Church members who believe in Christ’s sacrificial atonement and are striving to follow in His footsteps<sup>17</sup>
3. A membership that is unified in its beliefs and doctrines<sup>18</sup>
4. Members who are rearing strong, loving families<sup>19</sup>
5. Members who believe in the power of God to do miracles today<sup>20</sup>
6. Members who have a love for the scriptures and are striving to live by every word that proceeds forth out of the mouth of God<sup>21</sup>
7. Members who are a law-abiding people<sup>22</sup>
8. Members who give unselfishly not only tithes and offerings but also of their time and talents to further the Lord’s work<sup>23</sup>
9. A well-educated Church<sup>24</sup>
10. A healthy people who abstain from using alcohol, tobacco, and other substances harmful to their bodies<sup>25</sup>

11. Members who are clean in speech<sup>26</sup>
12. A missionary Church<sup>27</sup>
13. A people who are actively participating in service to the community, state, and nation<sup>28</sup>
14. A Church that insists that its members obey all of the Ten Commandments including keeping the Sabbath day holy<sup>29</sup>
15. A people who practice charity for those both inside and outside the LDS Church<sup>30</sup>
15. Members who actively participate in Church services and leadership most often without monetary compensation<sup>31</sup>
16. A belief in the importance of temples and in salvation for our ancestors<sup>32</sup>
17. A belief that all people are spiritual brothers and sisters and children of our Heavenly Father and as such have great worth to God and the potential to become like Him<sup>33</sup>
18. A belief in the Holy Ghost's power to witness and justify<sup>34</sup>
19. Members who believe in the biblical standards of morality, marriage, and family and oppose abortion and all sexual sins<sup>35</sup>
20. A Church that accepts truth from any source whether secular or religious<sup>36</sup>
21. A Church which has a rational claim to the divine authority given by the Savior<sup>37</sup>
22. An organization that is led through revelation from Jesus Christ and thus holds that the Savior is the head and foundation of the Church<sup>38</sup>
23. A Church that is founded upon apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone<sup>39</sup>

If, as Jesus taught, a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit,<sup>40</sup> how can the good fruit of Mormonism be explained?<sup>41</sup> In defending Peter and John, Gamaliel reasoned, "if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."<sup>42</sup> I believe that this is also true of LDS beliefs.

Moroni taught the key: "the way to judge is plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night...for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God."<sup>43</sup> Paul taught a similar rule in 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

**Test 2.** Jesus taught "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>44</sup> Latter-day Saints believe and practice being "benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men"<sup>45</sup> and in loving our neighbor as ourselves.<sup>46</sup> Latter-day Saints show their love by serving others through inspired activities such as home teaching, visiting teaching, family home evening, temple work for the salvation of our ancestors, welfare and service projects, fast offerings, as well as through many other personal acts of charity and love.

**Test 3.** Paul taught that "no man can say<sup>47</sup> that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."<sup>48</sup> LDS leaders and members testify that they know that Jesus Christ is the Lord,<sup>49</sup> therefore Latter-day Saints must, according to scripture, have the Holy Ghost.

**Test 4.** Paul states in Galatians 3:27: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" and as Jesus taught in Mark 16:16-18: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He also taught that believers would have power, in Christ's name, to: a) cast out demons, b) speak in tongues, c) be unharmed by deadly poisons, d) lay hands on the sick unto recovery. Latter-day Saints believe and practice these principles by 1) being baptized in the name of Christ and thereby putting on Christ and 2) by exercising priesthood power to do miracles and good works as in the New Testament church.<sup>50</sup>

**Test 5.** Paul also taught that the saints of the household of God are "built upon a foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone."<sup>51</sup> God's people must be led by revelation from Christ through his chosen servants. Without this essential communications link, a church is led by men and not the Lord. Thus the household of God must be founded upon continuing revelation through living oracles. LDS Church beliefs are uniquely founded upon this eternal principle.<sup>52</sup>

**Test 6.** In Ephesians 4:5, Paul confirmed that there is "One Lord, one faith, one baptism. Latter-day Saints believe there is one Lord, Jesus Christ,<sup>53</sup> in whom is salvation.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, Protestants also profess one Lord but hold that the Bible, which speaks of two Lords, is inerrant.<sup>55</sup> Latter-day Saints believe there is but one true gospel faith that is taught only in Christ's church. Others today seem to believe that God can have many churches teaching many different versions of the gospel, even though Paul taught otherwise.<sup>56</sup> Lastly, we believe in one true baptism by immersion at the hands

of one having authority. Protestants believe that many kinds of baptism are acceptable and may even refer to baptism as optional.

**Test 7.** The Bible teaches that God’s servants “must be called of God as was Aaron”<sup>57</sup> through revelation and by ordination of God’s chosen servants.<sup>58</sup> “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority.”<sup>59</sup> Protestant churches teach a variety of beliefs that contradict the above requirement.

**Test 8.** John taught “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.”<sup>60</sup> Latter-day Saints confess that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, came in the flesh<sup>61</sup> and was resurrected with a glorified body of flesh and bone.<sup>62</sup> The Book of Mormon teaches “that Christ...should take upon him the image of man, and...should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth.”<sup>63</sup> LDS beliefs affirm the importance of obtaining a physical body and of the resurrection of that body. Christ as the first fruits of the resurrection showed the rest of mankind the way. Since we confess and teach that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, we must, as John said, be “of God.”

**Test 9.** 1 John 5:1 states: “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe and teach that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah,<sup>64</sup> therefore; according to scripture, Latter-day Saints are “born of God.”

**Test 10.** John also taught in 1 John 5:5 and 10: “Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” Latter-day Saints firmly believe that Jesus is the Son of God,<sup>65</sup> therefore they must be among those who will overcome the world and receive his witness (the Holy Ghost). Incidentally, many who call themselves Christians believe that Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost citing Matthew 1:18–20 as proof. The truth is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Father and not the Holy Ghost.<sup>66</sup>

Thus the “fruit” of LDS doctrine pass all ten of these Bible tests and fail none. Catholic and Protestant beliefs on the other hand, deny a need for modern prophets or apostles and Protestants deny the power and authority whereby the gift of the Holy Ghost is given.<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that any religion that fails one or more of the above biblical tests is not teaching the com-

plete gospel of Christ but instead, is teaching a partial gospel based at least in part on the precepts of men.<sup>68</sup> Of these the Lord has said, “The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof.”<sup>69</sup>

## ADHERENCE TO ORTHODOX BELIEFS

Detractors often assert that since LDS beliefs regarding salvation, the Godhead, the exaltation of man, and the accuracy of the Bible differ from Protestant or Catholic beliefs, we must believe “another gospel”<sup>70</sup> and are therefore not Christian. Though others do have a portion of the gospel as found in the Bible, they lack the fullness of the everlasting gospel spoken of in Revelation 14:6; 3 Nephi 27:13–21; D&C 14:10; and 20:9. The fullness of the gospel is defined in Bruce R. McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine* as “those laws, doctrines, ordinances, powers, and authorities needed to enable men to gain the fullness of salvation” (i.e., exaltation in God’s kingdom).<sup>71</sup> Since the power and authority to administer the saving ordinances resides solely in Christ’s church, only that church has the fullness of His gospel. The fullness of the gospel as taught by the LDS Church is in agreement with Bible teachings. To illustrate this point, Latter-day Saints generally list five principles and ordinances as essential to salvation. These are:

1. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer<sup>72</sup>
2. Repentance from personal sin<sup>73</sup>
3. Baptism by immersion by those having authority<sup>74</sup>
4. Receipt of the Holy Ghost<sup>75</sup>
5. Enduring to the end through obedience to gospel teachings<sup>76</sup>

These principles are also taught clearly in the Book of Mormon:

And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness to the end. Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized

in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.<sup>77</sup>

In contrast, fundamentalist Christians believe that in order to be saved we must 1) accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and 2) accept certain “basic Christian beliefs” such as:

1. Accepting the deity of Christ
2. Accepting the bodily resurrection of Jesus
3. Believing in salvation solely by the grace of God, through faith alone, since Christ’s atonement pays for all sin.
4. Believing in the Trinity
5. Believing in the virgin birth

The first question that must be asked is: Are these tenets in agreement with Bible scripture? Members of the Church of Jesus Christ would agree that the first two stated “basic Christian beliefs” are true and are in accordance with the Bible. They are also basic LDS beliefs; but only the first, as it pertains to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is essential to salvation. I am unaware of any scripture that requires belief in bodily resurrection as a direct or indirect requirement for salvation (even though this is a true doctrine).

The third tenet is accurate if one understands the conditional nature of Christ’s atonement for personal sin. He died for all mankind on condition that we accept his sacrifice and follow Him.<sup>78</sup> Eternal life is gained through knowing God<sup>79</sup> and keeping his commandments.<sup>80</sup> It thus becomes part of enduring.

The fourth tenet would be true (per John 17:3) if the doctrine of the Trinity were true. The word *trinity* is not found in the Bible and the concept of biblical oneness implies only unity of purpose and action. An unbiased reading of John 17:11, 21–22; Romans 12:16; 15:6; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 6:17; 8:6; 10:17; 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 1:10; and Hebrews 2:11 demonstrates this.

Lastly, belief in the virgin birth, as taught by fundamentalist Christians, is not a true doctrine and is in no way a requirement for salvation. This teaching, like those of the Trinity, transubstantiation, indulgences, limbo, and others, was introduced during the apostasy following the death of Christ’s apostles.

Thus, the gospel as taught in the Church of Jesus Christ, especially in the critical area of salvation, is in harmony with the Bible, while fundamentalist doctrines generally ignore references to principles other than faith. Any

additional demands found in the scriptures, such as baptism or obedience to commandments, are often rationalized or referred to as optional. To this the Lord has said: “Woe to the rebellious...that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.”<sup>81</sup>

Mormons do not ignore Bible passages that refer to repentance, baptism, or the gift of the Holy Ghost, nor do we think that through our works we can somehow be saved without Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints cannot be accused of professing to know God but in works deny him,<sup>82</sup> but instead are by patient continuance in well doing, seeking for glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.<sup>83</sup>

## TEACHING “ANOTHER JESUS”

An additional criticism leveled against Latter-day Saints is that they teach “another Jesus” as described in 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.” In the past I provided the following somewhat modified quote from Bruce R. McConkie to show that the LDS concept of Jesus Christ is in perfect harmony with the biblical teachings concerning him:

[Members of the LDS Church believe in Jesus Christ who was Jehovah of the Old Testament (John 1:1, 14; 1 Cor. 10:1–4); the only begotten Son of God (Luke 1:35) born to Mary as] foretold by the prophets (Isa. 7:14); [the baby] cradled in a manger (Luke 2:12) [and] welcomed by angelic hosts (Luke 2:1–15); [the child] circumcised when eight days old (Luke 2:21) [and later] worshipped by the wise men from the east (Matt. 2:1–16); exiled to Egypt (Matt. 2:13–15); disciplined in Nazareth (Matt. 2:19–23); trained in carpentry in Galilee (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3); matured and grown in grace in the Holy Land (Luke 2:40–42, 52); baptized at Bethabara (John 1:28); tested in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11); a Holy Man who ministered in Judea, Galilee, Samaria, and beyond the borders of Israel; preached and wrought miracles throughout the land (John 11:46–47); cast out devils (Mark 1:21–28); healed lepers (Matt. 8:1–4); cured the lame (Matt. 15:29–31); opened blind eyes (Matt. 9:27–31); walked on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22–33); fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes (Matt. 15:32–38); raised the dead in Capernaum (Matt. 9:18–19), Nain (Luke 7:11–17), and Bethany (John 11:8–45); proclaimed his own divine Sonship (John 9:35–37); the Son who

was transfigured on the mount (Matt. 17:1–13); atoned in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–46); tried before Annas (John 18:13), Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57), Herod (Luke 23:7), and Pilate (Matt. 27:2); crucified on Calvary (Luke 23:33); resurrected in the Garden (Luke 24); and ascended from Olivet... (Acts 1:9–12) [This Son of Man] who “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7), shall come again as the Immortal King [of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16)], to rule and reign over [his people] and all the earth for ever and ever (Rev. 22:5).<sup>84</sup>

In January 2000 a more authoritative proclamation signed by the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles was published to the world. It reads:

**THE LIVING CHRIST**  
**The Testimony of the Apostles**  
**The Church of Jesus Christ**  
**of Latter-day Saints**

As we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, we offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth.

He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the new. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). Though sinless, He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), yet was despised for it. His gospel was a message of peace and goodwill. He entreated all to follow His example. He walked the roads of Palestine, healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead. He taught the truths of eternity, the reality of our premortal existence, the purpose of our life on earth, and the potential for the sons and daughters of God in the life to come.

He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary’s cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. His was the great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth.

We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

He rose from the grave to “become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He visited among those He had loved in life. He also ministered among His “other sheep” (John 10:16) in ancient America. In the modern world, He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised “dispensation of the fullness of times” (Ephesians 1:10).

Of the Living Christ, the prophet Joseph wrote: “His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: “I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father” (D&C 110:3–4).

Of Him the Prophet also declared: “And now after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

“That by him, and through him, and of him the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (D&C 76:22–24).

We declare in words of solemnity that His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth—“built upon the foundation of...apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).

We testify that He will someday return to earth. “And the glory of thee Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts.

We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King

Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY  
THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE  
January 1, 2000

This is the Jesus Christ in whom we believe. He is our Lord, our Savior, and our Redeemer (1 Nephi 22:12) and we pray that all men may come to know him and his Father and return to their presence someday.

## CONCLUSION

If members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do not qualify as Christians then no church or people can. If doctrine is used as the criterion, many Catholic and Protestant churches can be disqualified because they teach doctrines foreign to the Bible. Doctrines such as baptism by sprinkling, the infallibility of the Bible, disbelief in the literal resurrection of the body, the elevation and worship of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, etc. are typical examples.<sup>85</sup> Since Christians cannot agree among themselves on key points of doctrine such as these, it is absurd to use these or similar doctrines as qualifications for the title of Christian. If critics wish to ignore the truth, then so be it. Members of the LDS Church are Christian despite unjustified claims to the contrary. Those that so judge should remember that “with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.”<sup>86</sup> Those that deny Latter-day Saints the title “Christian” may themselves be denied by Christ at the last day.<sup>87</sup>

## FURTHER READING

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## NOTES

1. The terms are used in Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, and 1 Peter 4:16.
2. D&C 115:4.
3. 1 Corinthians 1:1–13.
4. Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Seeking the Spirit* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 73.
5. Charles D. Tate, “*Book of Mormon References to Deity*,” *Ensign* (April 1992): 63.
6. Ibid.
7. 2 Nephi 25:23–26, 29.
8. Jacob 1:7–8.
9. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 121.
10. Eldon J. Watson, *Brigham Young Addresses*, Vol. 4 for July 14, 1861 (Unpublished, 1980), 5.
11. Ezra Taft Benson, “*Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer*,” *Ensign* (June 1990): 2–6. See also Ezra Taft Benson, *Come Unto Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1983), 127, 132.
12. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, edited by Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 68.
13. Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1992), 176–177.
14. See Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., *Religious Truths Defined* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1959), 155–187; Gilbert W. Scharff, *The Truth About “The God Makers”* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1986), 72, 123–124; Richard R. Hopkins, *How Greek Philosophy Corrupted The Christian Concept of God* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1998), 11–30, 106–148.

15. Matthew 7:15–20, 12:33; Luke 6:43–45.
16. Article of Faith 1; 2 Nephi 25:23, 25, 26, 28; 31:18, 21.
17. 1 Peter 2:21; 2 Nephi 2:7; 31:16; Article of Faith 3, Article of Faith 13.
18. 1 Corinthians 1:10; Mosiah 18:21.
19. D&C 68:25–28; Mosiah 4:14–15.
20. Article of Faith 7; D&C 35:8–9.
21. Article of Faith 8; Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Moroni 7:25; D&C 1:29–32.
22. Article of Faith 12; D&C 101:76–101.
23. D&C 64; Mosiah 18:8–9.
24. D&C 88:118; 90:15; 93:36; 109:7.
25. 1 Corinthians 6:19; D&C 89.
26. D&C 63:61–64.
27. Matthew 28:19; D&C 1; 4; 18.
28. D&C 134.
29. D&C 59; 68:29.
30. D&C 121:45; 2 Corinthians 9:7.
31. D&C 84:103–110.
32. D&C 124:22–44; 127; 128.
33. D&C 93; Matthew 5:48; 1 John 3:2; D&C 132:19–20.
34. D&C 46.
35. D&C 42:18–25.
36. D&C 93:23–40.
37. D&C 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:68–75.
38. Ephesians 4:15; Helaman 5:12.
39. Ephesians 2:20; 4:11–15.
40. Matthew 7:18.
41. See Ephesians 5:8–10; Titus 2:14; Revelation 14:12–13.
42. Acts 5:38–39.
43. Acts 5:38–39.
44. John 13:35.
45. Article of Faith 13.
46. Galatians 5:13–14; 6:2, 10; Mosiah 23:15; D&C 42:45; 59:6; 88:123; 112:11; Moses 7:33.
47. Joseph Smith translated “say” as “know.” Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City; Deseret Book Company, 1976), 223.
48. 1 Corinthians 12:3.
49. Mosiah 3:12, 17; 3 Nephi 19:18; D&C 15:1; 16:1; 17:9; 18:47; 19:1; 20:1; 21:1; 27:1; 35:1–2.
50. See Articles of Faith 4, 5, and 7.
51. Ephesians 2:19–20.
52. See Articles of Faith 6, 7, and 9.
53. 1 Corinthians 8:6.
54. 2 Nephi 31:21.
55. Matthew 11:25; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Timothy 1:18; Revelation 11:15.
56. 1 Corinthians 1:10.
57. Hebrews 5:4.
58. Exodus 28:1; Numbers 27:18, 23.
59. Article of Faith 5; Mosiah 18:17.
60. 1 John 4:2.
61. 1 Nephi 10:11; 15:13; Ether 3:9; D&C 18:11; 20:1, 26; 93:4, 11.
62. Luke 24:36–39.
63. Mosiah 7:27.
64. 2 Nephi 25:19; 26:12; Moroni 7:44; D&C 29:1; 35:1–2; 38:1–3; 39:1–4.
65. Mosiah 3:8; 4:2; Alma 6:8; 36:17; Helaman 3:28; 5:12; 14:12; 3 Nephi 5:13, 26; 9:15; 20:31; Mormon 5:14; 7:5; Ether 4:7.
66. See answer to the question “Was Jesus Christ Begotten of the Father or the Holy Ghost and by what means?” in Michael W. Hickenbotham, *Answering Challenging Mormon Questions* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1995), 95.
67. 2 Timothy 3:5.
68. Isaiah 29:13.
69. Matthew 21:43.
70. Galatians 1:6.
71. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Second Edition (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 333.
72. Mark 16:15–18; John 3:16–18; 8:24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:16–17; 10:8; Heb. 3:17–19; 10:38–39; 1 Pet. 1:9; 1 John 5:5.
73. Isaiah 55:6–7; Ezek. 33:14–15; Matthew 21:28–32; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Hebrews 6:1–2; 1 John 1:8–9.
74. Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 7:28–30; John 3:5; Acts 2:37–38; 10:47–48; Galatians 3:27; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21.
75. Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:37–38; 11:16; 1 Corinthians 2:11–14; 12:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13.
76. Ecclesiastes 12:13; Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Hebrews 6:15; James 1:12, 22, 27; 3 John 11; Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 21:7.
77. 3 Nephi 27:16, 19–20.
78. Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 2:21.
79. John 17:3.

80. 1 John 2:3–5
81. Isaiah 30:1.
82. Titus 1:16.
83. Romans 2:7.
84. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1985), 639–640.
85. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, Vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1960), 174–184.
86. Matthew 7:2.
87. Matthew 7:21–23.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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