
THE PENTECOST 109



HE WILL REVIVE US

Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

(Hosea 6:1-3)

In the eighth century BC these words flowed from the lips and heart of the prophet Hosea. He lived in a time of transition. Under King Jeroboam II in the northern kingdom of Israel and King Uzziah in the southern kingdom of Judah, God's people had been enjoying a time of prosperity. Assyria, the world power of the time was preoccupied with its north and east borders. This time of prosperity however did not lead to a prosperity of faith. Instead wickedness spread. After Jeroboam II's death, Israel fell into great political instability and Assyria, under new leadership itself, became aggressive towards Israel. Under the strain and anguish of seeing God's people wallowing in impiety and the strain of the danger on Israel's borders, Hosea cries out this appeal. He calls Israel to return to The Lord and throw herself on His mercy.

If Hosea were alive today, we might find him feeling a similar way and saying a similar thing to us. Living in a prosperous, postmodern world of relative values and situation ethics the modern 21st century man and woman continues his or her journey away from God and His truth. Our backsliding is in spite of present dangers which would should cause us to run to God all the harder. AIDS threatens and

claims the lives of millions, international terrorism has risen beyond what would have been imagined only one generation ago. Stress related illness afflicts large numbers. Yet, people today, in many cases, feel that they are better off living away from God than living with a God who would rule their lives. Even in the church many have this same apathy.

Friend this is an apathy from which, at this present time, we can return. Are you torn? Let Him heal. Are you stricken? Let Him bind you up. He has a work and a transformation to do in you and me that is infinitely worth surrendering to and submitting to. Similar to the physical body of Christ being in the grave for three days and then resurrecting, on the third day, He shall revive us. Come let us return to the Lord.

"After two days will he revive us: ...". Let those words sink in. Our year of jubilee is coming. But there is a hump to get over. Unbelief, pride, self-sufficiency, and inflexibility to change all have chained us down from flying in the skies of revival. Self-satisfaction also cements us in our present state. This cement must be broken up. Friend, let us break loose from our habit-beaten path and cry to God for His purposes to be fulfilled in us. Let us not make excuses for sin. We need all of the fruit, gifts, empowerment, wisdom, direction and anointing that we can get from the Lord.

"... he shall come unto us as the rain,...". This shower shall be even more refreshing than natural rain would be to a dehydrated desert traveler. Oh to be ushered into the spiritual and heavenly realm where we are feeding on Christ and where the deeper Christian life is our normal experience. Brother, sister, do you, do I dare to believe. Do we dare to hold this scripture

before The Lord and claim it as a promise? Pray with me,

Jesus, we have come to return. Our sins have torn us. Our sins have stricken us down. We need Your forgiveness. We need Your grace. We need Your healing and binding, that we may live in Your sight. In times of natural prosperity we have not always been thankful nor have we always pursued spiritual prosperity with hungry hearts. We have even been careless. We have been apathetic. Now Lord we see it and return. Forgive us. Heal us. Revive us and come to us like the rain. We are the dehydrated desert traveller. We need all of the life, healing, fruit, spiritual gifts, wisdom, and direction You can give us. We have read that You will revive us and that You will come to us like the rain. We have seen it in Your word and now faith is rising. Our eyes are rising also and we fix them on You. We close up our umbrellas and lift up our buckets. Answer our prayer and fill us with Your Spirit.

Shawn Stevens

ONE LORD OF THE HARVEST

One LORD of the harvest
One Pearl of Great Price
One gospel with power
To save a wandering life

One Lamb Who is worthy
And one sacrifice
One atonement sufficient
To buy eternal life

One door to the sheepfold

One way that is right
One voice that we follow
As we're walking through this life

This stone, it was rejected
By men He came to save
But here it forms the corner
Of this house that God has made

Shawn Stevens

MORMANISM AND CHRISTIANITY

One religion which goes back to the early days of American history and which has spread beyond America is Mormonism, also known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It could be that Mormon elders have come to your door and introduced you to their religion. What is the true story behind Mormonism? Is it a Christian denomination or a pseudo-Christian cult?

Mormonism's founder was a man named Joseph Smith, born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont. The young Joseph was influenced by his father who loved to search for buried treasure. An important date in the life of Joseph Smith is 1820 at which time he claimed to have received a vision in which God the Father and Jesus Christ allegedly spoke with him. Joseph claimed that they spoke rather disparagingly about the Christian Church and told him that Christianity needed to be restored and that he, Joseph Smith, was chosen to launch this task. Smith claims that in 1827 he received golden plates and that from 1827 to 1829 he translated these into what is today *The Book of Mormon*. This book was copyrighted and published in 1830 and on April 6 of that year, Joseph and his brothers, Hyrum and Samuel, as well as Oliver Cowdery and David and

Peter Whitmer founded the new religion. This fledgling group would grow and also re-locate to Kirtland, Ohio. Here they experienced remarkable growth and in six years had grown to 16,000 souls. In Kirtland, Smith instituted his infamous practice of polygamy. Mormons later established themselves in large numbers in Nauvoo, Illinois. Mormons became very controversial over their teachings. Much was spoken and printed against them and an offended Joseph Smith ordered the destruction of the publication, *The Nauvoo Expositor*, which printed anti-Mormon material. At this the state of Illinois intervened and arrested Joseph and his brother, Hyrum. On June 27, 1844, a mob stormed the jail and shot Joseph and his brother dead. After Joseph was assassinated, most Mormons came to accept the leadership of the 43-year old Brigham Young. Young decided to abandon Nauvoo and led the Mormon community on a great trek through the wilderness of Southwest America to the valley of the great Salt Lake. For more than thirty years, Young led the Mormon Church.

What do Mormons accept as their source of authority? Mormons claim to accept the Bible insofar as it is properly translated. However, whenever the Bible contradicts Mormon teachings, Mormons are quick to accept Mormon doctrine over biblical instruction. Mormons hold in high regard *The Book of Mormon* as well as other works such as *Doctrine and Covenants*, *The Pearl of Great Price* and the teachings of their living prophet.

What do Mormons believe and how do they differ from evangelical Christianity? Mormons teach that God was once a man and that men have the possibility of becoming gods. Jesus Christ, in

Mormonism, was a pre-existent spirit like we are all said to be but, according to Mormonism, was the first-born of God's spirit children. Men are said to be pre-existent souls who assume bodies at birth. For the Mormon, the highest goal is to enter the celestial kingdom that is reserved for the Melchizedek priesthood.

What are some of the problems with Mormon teachings? One problem is that *The Book of Mormon* purports a history of two ancient civilizations located on the American continent. It claims that the first of these great civilizations left the Tower of Babel around 2,250 BC, crossed through Europe and entered the eastern coast of what is now Central America. This civilization was allegedly destroyed as a result of its corruption. The second group that *The Book of Mormon* tells about, allegedly came to America about 600 BC and were righteous Jews. They later were divided into two warring camps, the Nephites and the Lamanites. The Lamanites were cursed for their evil deeds and their curse took the form of their dark skin. Mormons also teach that the North American Indians originated from the Lamanites. Mormons teach that Christ, Himself, visited the North American continent and preached to the Nephites. The Nephites were allegedly destroyed by the Lamanites in approximately 385 AD. This interesting account in *The Book of Mormon* is, however, without any archeological evidence and leading archeological researchers have repudiated the claims of these civilizations having existed.

The idea that the North American Indians are descendents of the Laminites and that the Laminites are of Jewish origins is also problematic. Anthropologists and specialists in genetics testify that

genetically the Jewish or Semitic race bears little or no resemblance to the American Indians. There is little or no correlation genetically between these people groups and pheno-typically American Indians are considered to be from Mongolian in origin, not Mediterranean. Bentley Glass, a geneticist and W. C. Boyd, an anthropologist, both from Johns Hopkins University confirm this fact.

Another problem concerning the authenticity of the Book of Mormon is that Joseph Smith, in his book *Pearl of Great Price*, claims that the gold tablets which he translated were written in a form of Egyptian writing and that a colleague of Smith, Martin Harris, took a re-copied sampling of this Egyptian writing to the eminent professor, Charles Anthon of Columbia University. He claims that Professor Anthon verified that his translation of this sample was correct. Smith claimed that Harris said to him these words:

Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. Then I showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. (*The Pearl of Great Price*, Section 2, verses 62-64)

The problem is that Professor Anthon testified that he never said any of these things. Professor Anthon wrote the following letter to a Mr. E. D. Howe, discussing this matter:

*New York. N.Y.,
Feb. 17, 1834*

*Mr. E. D. Howe
Painesville, Ohio*

Dear Sir:

I received this morning your favor of the ninth instant, and lose no time in making a reply. The whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be "reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics" is perfectly false. Some years ago, a plain, and apparently simple-hearted farmer, called upon me with a note from Dr. Mitchell of our city, now deceased, requesting me to decipher, if possible, a paper, which the farmer would hand me, and which Dr. Mitchell confessed he had been unable to understand. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a hoax. When I asked the person who brought it, how he obtained the writing, he gave me, as far as I can now recollect, the following account: A 'gold book,' consisting of a number of plates of gold, fastened together in the shape of a book by wires of the same metal, had been dug up in the northern part of the state of New York, and along with the book an enormous pair of "gold spectacles"! These spectacles were so large, that, if a person attempted to look through them, his two eyes would have to be turned towards one of the glasses merely, the spectacles in question being altogether too large for the breadth of the human face. Whoever examined the plates through the spectacles, was enabled not only to read them, but fully to understand their meaning. All this knowledge, however, was confined at the time to a young man, who had the trunk containing the book and the spectacles in his sole possession. This young man was placed behind a curtain, in the garret of a farmhouse, and, being thus concealed from view, put on the spectacles occasionally, or rather, looked through one

of the glasses, deciphered the characters in the book, and, having committed some of them to paper, handed copies from behind the curtain, to those who stood on the outside. Not a word, however, was said about the plates having been deciphered "by the gift of God." Everything, in this way, was effected by the large pair of spectacles. The farmer added that he had been requested to contribute a sum of money towards the publication of the 'golden book', the contents of which would, as he had been assured, produce an entire change in the world and save it from ruin. So urgent had been these solicitations that he intended selling his farm and handing over the amount received to those who wished to publish the plates. As a last precautionary step, however, he had resolved to come to New York, and obtain the opinion of the learned about the meaning of the paper which he brought with him, and which had been given him as part of the contents of the book, although no translation had been furnished at the time by the young man with the spectacles. On hearing this odd story, I changed my opinion about the paper, and, instead of viewing it any longer as a hoax upon the learned, I began to regard it as a part of a scheme to cheat the farmer of his money, and I communicated my suspicions to him, warning him to beware of rogues. He requested an opinion from me in writing, which of course I declined giving, and he then took his leave carrying the paper with him. This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed

sideways, were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calendar given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived. I am thus particular as to the contents of the paper, inasmuch I have frequently conversed with my friends on the subject, since the Mormonite excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained anything else but "Egyptian Hieroglyphics." Sometime after, the same farmer gave me a second visit. He brought with him the golden book in print, and offered it to me for sale. I declined purchasing. He then asked permission to leave the book with me for examination. I declined receiving it, although his manner was strangely urgent. I adverted once more to the roguery which had been in my opinion practiced upon him, and asked him what had become of the gold plates. He informed me that they were in a trunk with the large pair of spectacles. I advised him to go to a magistrate and have the trunk examined. He said the "curse of God" would come upon him should he do this. On my pressing him, however, to pursue the course which I had recommended, he told me that he would open the trunk, if I would take the "curse of God" upon myself. I replied that I would do so with the greatest willingness and would incur every risk of that nature, provided I could only extricate him from the grasp of the rogues. He then left me. I have thus given you a full statement of all that I know respecting the origin of Mormonism, and must beg you, as a personal favor, to publish this letter immediately, should you find my name mentioned again by these wretched

fanatics.

Your respectfully,

Charles Anthon, LL.D.,

Columbia University. (*Kingdom of the Cults*, 181-182)

So we see from this letter that Professor Anthon neither supported the Book of Mormon nor trusted it as being authentic.

Another embarrassing piece of evidence which detracts from the authority of the Book of Mormon is that it contains in its beginning pages a testimony of three witnesses, Oliver Crowder, David Whitmer and Martin Harris who allegedly said:

... an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engraving thereon. ..." (*Kingdom of the Cults*, 187)

Mormons admit today that all three of these witnesses apostatized from the Mormon faith and that Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, wrote three articles against the character of these three witnesses.

If the Book of Mormon didn't come from mysterious golden plates, then where did it come from? There is strong reason to suspect that much of the contents came from another book written by Solomon Spaulding, a retired minister who had written a number of romances that contained biblical backgrounds similar to those found in *The Book of Mormon*. A manuscript from one of Spaulding's work was discovered in Hawaii in 1844. The manuscript is now in the possession of Oberlin College. *The Book of Mormon* is not a direct copy of Spaulding's work but the material has been reworked by Joseph Smith. There is some debate concerning

Spaulding's work, because there was more than one manuscript written and discovered. The earlier manuscript is called *The Manuscript Story* and the later manuscript is called *The Manuscript Found*. Apparently, it is his later manuscript which has the stronger connection to *The Book of Mormon*. In his book "*The Book of Mormon?*" Dr. Bales comments on the similarity between *The Book of Mormon* and the *Manuscript Found* and concludes that there are just too many points of similarity between them to be without significance. (*The Book of Mormon?* By James D. Bales, Ph.D. The Manney Company, Fort Worth 14, Texas, pp. 138-142)

I have already said that Mormonism teaches a theology of many gods and that in Mormonism, God the Father and Jesus Christ are separate gods. Joseph Smith also taught that God The Father was once a man like us. (see "King Follett Discourse," *Journal of Discourses* 6:3-4, also in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 345-346, and *History of the Church*, vol. 6, 305-307) This greatly differs from the Bible's teaching about God. What do we learn about God from the Holy Bible?

An important starting point to gaining an understanding of God is to realize that there is only one God. The Bible states; "That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else." (1 Kings 8: 60). God also says:

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.

Isaiah 45:5-6

Along with these Old Testament witnesses to the truth of there being only one God, the New Testament declares this as well. We read; "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3). Does not the Bible sometimes refer to other gods? Occasionally, yes. The Bible acknowledges the existence of angels, demons and other beings, but angels are angels by nature and demons are demons by nature. There is only one God *by nature*. The Bible teaches; "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." (Galatians 4:8). This is a reference to false deities, false gods, spirits or conceptions of God which are not God by nature. There is only one God by nature.

This is a mystery, but God is a "composite unit." It is a great mystery, and yet a reality, that even though there is one God, within the one God there is a plurality. God seems to sometimes refer to Himself in plural terms, for example; "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:26). Also, we read; "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:"— (Genesis 3: 22). In the Bible, God is *the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. There are numerous passages in the Bible where the three are mentioned together in the same passage, for example; "Go ye therefore,

and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" (Matthew 28:19). All three were present at Jesus' baptism; "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16, 17).

Some people try to explain the unity and plurality of God by offering illustrations such as that of an egg being one and, yet, consisting of three parts; a shell, a white and a yoke. Another example is that of water, which can exist as a solid, liquid and as a gas. These illustrations may help some, but they still fall short of describing the great mystery of the unity and the plurality of God.

What we can be sure of is that The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not separate competing deities that started out like us and achieved godhood. We can also be sure that we cannot become gods just like them. Mormonism is not based on sound doctrine. It is based on the Book of Mormon and other Mormon writings. It does not have a credible history. God has revealed what we need to know about Him in His book the Bible. There is only one true God by nature. God bless you as you seek Him.

Shawn Stevens

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