

MORMONS AND WHO THEY WORSHIP

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism declared: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.” (First Article of Faith.) The proper name of the Church he founded is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As the name implies, the central doctrine of the church is the testimony that Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible bears witness, is indeed the son of God. The church claims itself to be a restoration of the very organization established by Christ in the meridian of time. It professes the same keys, powers, knowledge, and authority had by righteous followers of Christ in all past ages. Every doctrine, ordinance, and spiritual gift, spoken of in the New Testament can now be found among the Latter-day Saints.

In their worship Latter-day Saints follow the pattern established by Christ, believing him to be the perfect example in all things. “The true worshipers,” Christ declared, “shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” (John 4:23.) The Book of Mormon, an ancient scriptural record restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith, informs us that even those who lived in Old Testament times “believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name.” (Jacob 4:5) It invites all to do likewise. In a personal revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith he was instructed that “Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved: Wherefore, all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father, for in that name shall they be called at the last day; wherefore, if they know not the name by which they are called, they cannot have place in the kingdom of my Father.” (D&C 18:23-25.) Continuing, the revelation declared, “You shall fall down and worship the Father in my name.” (v. 40.)

In April of 1830 Joseph Smith was directed by the Lord to proceed with the organization of the Church. The revelation so directing stated: “There is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them.” This God, the revelation declared, created man male and female in his image and likeness 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.” Nonetheless because of the transgression of those laws it became necessary for the “Almighty God” to send his own son to suffer, die and rise again that he might ascend into heaven where he was to “sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father; That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved.” Concluding this announcement the revelation states: “We know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.” (D&C 20:17-29.)

Reviewing these principles in a devotional talk at the Brigham Young University, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, warned against an idea popular in the Christian world of singling out the Savior for worship and adoration in

exclusion of the Father. In doing so he noted that “We do not have a fraction of the power we need to properly praise his [Christ’s] holy name and ascribe unto him the honor and power and might and glory and dominion that is his. He is our Lord, our God, and our King.” Notwithstanding the love and reverence we have for Christ, Elder McConkie noted that the commandment and example of the Savior was that we worship the “Father and him only.” In doing so he emphasized the propriety of our worshiping or exalting Christ in the sense of honor and devotion, but that if we are to be true to Christ’s teachings there is a special reverence and devotion that we reserve for the Father only.

Professed Christians who apparently have been waiting for some time for evidence that the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not Christian, were quick to see in this statement the evidence that they sought. Christianity Today asserted that Mormons are not Christian, stating “The apostle’s sermon illustrates the continued cleavage between orthodox Christianity and Mormonism.” (July 16, 1982, pp. 31-32.)

To the professed Christian, no better source could be suggested to resolve this difference than to turn to the record of Christ’s teachings. In the Gospel of John, which we assume to be authoritative and orthodox, we find over 120 references in which Christ defines his relationship to the Father. Listed are twenty illustrations:

John 4:23. “The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

4:34. “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

5:19. “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”

5:30. “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

5:43. “I come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not . . .”

5:45. “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.”

6:32. “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.”

6:38. “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

7:16. “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.”

7:29. “I am from him, and he hath sent me.”

8:28. “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.”

8:29. “I do always those things that please him.”

10:37. “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.”

14:24. “The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”

14:28. “I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.”

15:1. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.”

15:10. “If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”

17:3. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

17:25. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.”

John 17:26. “And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Christ came in the name of his Father to do the will of his Father. He testified that his Father was greater than he, indeed he reasoned: “The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.” (John 13:16) He worshipped the Father and taught all men to do likewise. He told his apostles that they would be rejected because the world has “not known the Father, nor me.” (John 16:3) So it has ever been.