

Presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a Mormon – by Rev. Tom Aicken

There are two things to keep in mind when reaching out to any member of a cult with the gospel: (1) Members of a cult will not listen to anything Christians say until it is first demonstrated how their cult is promoting error. Pointing out such error is what this present paper attempts to do for the Mormon who comes to your door. (2) Members of a cult, if they come to accept that their cult is wrong, will most often turn right away from religion entirely – once bitten, twice shy. It is imperative, therefore, that they hear a simple, loving and compelling presentation of the truth as it is in Jesus before they walk out your door. Prepare yourself to give them that prior to their visit. (Special thanks to Robert A. Morey. Much of the material here has been gleaned from his book How to Answer a Mormon.)

A Mormon comes to your door. How shall you begin?

Read to him Deut. 18:21,22.

Ask him, “Do you accept this test?”

Read to him Matt. 7:15-20.

Ask him, “What are the fruits of a false prophet?” The correct answer is his false prophecies.

Ask him, “What is the meaning of v.18?” (A true prophet cannot give false prophecies; a false prophet cannot give true prophecies.)

Once this is established, ask him, “Do you believe that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God?”

This is an important question because Smith is the one, reportedly, who translated from “Reformed Egyptian” what is now the Book of Mormon. Both Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price claim that he was a prophet of God.

Joseph Fielding Smith, a past president of the Mormon Church, tells us upon whom Mormonism stands or falls: “Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground.” (Church News, 1 April, 1939)

On the basis of Deut. 18 and Matt. 7, according to God's own test for determining who is (and who is not) a true prophet, let us examine some of the prophecies of Joseph Smith:

- (1) In February, 1835, Joseph Smith prophesied the coming of the Lord and the end of the present order of things, saying that it would all happen in 56 years, that is, by 1891 (History of the Church 2:182). At the April 1843 General Conference he again prophesied the coming of the Lord. He said this would happen when he was 85 years old, or as he said earlier, since he was born in 1805, sometime in 1891 (History of the Church 5:336).

Ask him, "Did this happen? What does this tell us about Joseph Smith as a prophet of God?"

- (2) At the 1835 meeting Smith also prophesied that Lyman E. Johnson, John F. Boynton and William Smith (Joseph's brother) would all live to see the coming of the Lord. They would see Christ Himself "with power and great glory," and they would see Him come "to take vengeance on the wicked" (History of the Church 2:188; 2:191).

What really happened, however, is that Johnson died in 1856, Boynton died in 1890, and Smith died in 1893. Although William Smith lived two years beyond the predicted date of Christ's return, 1891, neither he nor any of his friends saw the coming of the Lord. They saw no power, no glory, and no vengeance on the wicked!

Ask him, "What does this tell us about Joseph Smith as a prophet of God?"

- (3) In September, 1832, Smith prophesied that before the end of the world, as the first step in building the New Jerusalem in the state of Missouri, the temple would be erected in his generation, and that he himself would dedicate it (Doctrine and Covenants 84:1-5). As apostle Orson Pratt points out, however, Mormons so wanted it to happen that, even after Joseph Smith's death, many of them still expected the temple to be built at least in their own lifetime (Journal of Discourses 13:362).

Ask him one more time, "What does this tell us about Joseph Smith as a prophet of God?"

Joseph Smith never got a single prophecy right in his entire life, and it was because (Matt. 7:18) “a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.” Even his prophecy of the American Civil War from 1832 (Doctrine and Covenants 87:1-6), which is still celebrated by Mormons today, was all wrong. For one thing, it was general knowledge in 1832 that a war between the states was inevitable. For another thing, when it did break out in 1861 it was not as he said it would be, a war “poured out upon all nations” or “a full end of all nations.”

Thoughts to Ponder

What does 2 Pet. 1:19-21 tell us about the prophets and apostles who gave us Holy Scripture? What does Deut. 18:21,22 tell us about Joseph Smith?

Conclusion

Christianity is all about the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 1:26-31). “For to me,” wrote the apostle Paul, “to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). But consider what Joseph Smith said in a public address on 26 May, 1844, just weeks before he was killed:

“Come on! ye persecutors! ye false swearers! All hell, boil over! Ye burning mountains, roll down your lava! for I will come out on the top at last. I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet... I love to hear the wolves howl! When they can get rid of me, the devil will also go.” (History of the Church 6:408-9, the footnote)

In whom did Joseph Smith glory, and what does that tell us about him?

Joseph Fielding Smith was right in his assessment. Joseph Smith was either a prophet of God, or, as we have just seen and has been demonstrated from Holy Scripture, he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. Indeed, there can be no middle ground!