

Jesus didn't attack other churches. Why do you do this?

Responses to Mormon Claims

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Many Mormons have said to us “Jesus didn't attack other churches. Why do you do this? It's not Christ-like!” Christians are often labelled as anti-Mormon when we compare teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly known as the Mormon Church) with the Bible and history, no matter how lovingly we present the truth. We are not against individual Mormons, but the Mormon religious system, which prevents people from living in eternity with the Heavenly Father. Why do we say this? There are 3 reasons.

1. Jude, Jesus' half brother, urges us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”(Jude 3) Mormonism has a different origin, different God/gods, a different means of salvation and different scriptures.¹ When we tell Mormon missionaries on our doorsteps that we are Christians, this does not discourage them from sharing their convictions. They tell us about the *Book of Mormon* and Joseph Smith. When fundamental Christian faith is under attack, we must, out of reverence to Christ, be prepared to answer often-hostile questions about our faith (1 Peter 3:15). We are to answer “with meekness and fear” and must keep a good conscience that will result in good conduct in Christ (3:16). We do so, in comparing and contrasting Mormon authoritative teachings with the Bible. Our aim is not to misrepresent any system of beliefs. God is also in the audience when we are speaking with Mormons. When the truth is distorted, we cannot bring glory to God. Whatever we do, we do all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10: 31).

2. Jesus did confront religious leaders of his day (Luke 14: 1-6), and warned his disciples of false teachers and their teachings (Matthew 7:15-23, 16:5,6). He accused the scribes and Pharisees of shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men (Matthew 23:13). These religious leaders should have acknowledged the ways of God being revealed to them and prophecies being fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus, but they shut their eyes and refused to enter the kingdom of heaven.² Even worse, they did not allow others to go in. Jesus called them “white washed tombs” (Matt. 23:27), “snakes, brood of vipers.”(23:33) Moreover, Jesus also warned his disciples of false prophets who appear harmless (Matt. 7: 15), and of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees leading many astray (Matt. 16:5-6, 12). So warning people against false teachers and their teachings is Christ-like.³

3. Paul's prayer in Romans 10: 1- 4 is our prayer for our Mormon friends. Paul reasserts his deep longing prayer for the salvation (having eternal life) of his ex-brethren, the Jews (Romans 10:1). I am not an ex-Mormon, myself. However, I do know Mormons are sincere in their beliefs and in their zeal to share their faith with others. See Romans 9:30- 10:4 .

9:30: What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 31: But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32: Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33: As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

10: 1: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3: For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4: For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

(Romans 9:30-10:4-King James Version)

The Jews had a worthy goal, that is, to seek righteousness, but they sought it in the wrong way- through their rigid pursuit of works and the Mosaic law. The Jews have strenuously engaged in the race but have not reached the goal of the race. But Gentiles, who were not even in the race (“*followed not after righteousness*”) have reached the finishing line, have obtained a right standing with God.⁴ God was ready to be found by those who did not even seek Him (Isaiah 65:1). Romans 3:10-11 says, “*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*” “*All of our righteous acts are filthy rags before God,*” says, Isaiah 64:6.

Then how did the Gentiles attain righteousness? By faith (Romans 9:30). The Old Testament taught salvation by faith, but the Jews of Paul's day failed to understand. We know that Abraham “*believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness*” (Genesis 15:6). This happened at least two decades **before** the offering of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-14).⁵ Before Abraham demonstrated this act of obedience, Abraham's faith brought him righteousness. When Abraham believed in God, the sign of circumcision had not been given by God yet (Gen. 17:10, Rom 4:11).

In the Bible, righteousness is a declaration by God of being not guilty, not something owned or achieved by an individual person. Believers have received righteous **status** before God. All believers are justified as Abraham was, and it was his faith that was credited to him as righteousness (Romans 4:22-25) (See 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Paul says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth." (Rom. 10:4) Christ has brought the law to its culmination (*telos*) and thereby righteousness is available for anyone who believes. The Jews did not understand this, as **(1)** they were ignorant of God's righteousness and **(2)** they sought to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:3). They did not respond in faith to Christ and therefore, missed the righteousness of God. It was tragic. Like Abraham, true Christians believe in the God, who gives life to the dead, specifically, in the God who raised Jesus, our Lord, from the dead, therefore, Jesus' perfect righteousness is credited to true Christians making us acceptable in God's sight.

And therefore it was imputed to him (Abraham) for righteousness. 23: Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24: But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25: Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:22-25).

Mormons may say, "You mean all you have to do is say the right words, and then it is okay to live a life of sin?" The answer is No! This concept is totally foreign to the Bible. See the following:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Romans 6:1-2)

Good works do not produce our salvation, but good works **flow from** our salvation.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, : Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; : Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; : That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. : This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men (Titus 3:4-8).

For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Our spending eternity with our Heavenly Father is a gift from God. Eternal life is as close as your own mouth and heart (Rom. 10:8).

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

[Note: that Paul was not talking about "general salvation" (resurrection), but talking about spending eternity with the Heavenly Father.]

Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life (John 6:47).

[**Note:** The footnote in the LDS Bible says that *everlasting life* in this verse is **Eternal Life; Exaltation** (p.1336)]

Conclusion: We are to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. Romans 10:1-4 is our sincere prayer for our Mormon friends. We know they are sincere in their beliefs and in their zeal to share their faith with others. However, we do not agree with what the Mormon Church teaches its members about how one gets right with God. Evangelical Christians submit to God's righteousness by receiving it from him as a free gift. Good works do not produce our salvation, but our salvation leads us to do good works. Paul says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believeth." (Rom. 10:4) Are you too proud to submit to God's righteousness? Do not make the same mistake the Jews of Paul's time made. Today you may be declared righteous in God's sight.

NOTES

1. John Bracht, "Mormonism: magnificent illusion" in "Briefing" (Sydney, Matthias Press, Dec.17, 1997) p.14
2. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNT (ed. D. Carson, Cambridge, Apollos, 1992) p.579
3. Mark Cares, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons* (Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1993) p.214
4. Douglas Moo, "ROMANS" in "New Bible Commentary" (Leicester, IVP, 1994) p.1145
5. James R.White, "Letters to a Mormon Elder" (Minneapolis, Bethany House Publishing House, 1993) p.279