

The Gospel: “the message of Jesus’ death and bodily resurrection for the forgiveness of sins” OR “all the teachings, laws, and ordinances of the Mormon Church”?

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church) claims that the true gospel of Jesus Christ was lost until Joseph Smith restored it in 1830. The word “restore” means “*returning something (esp. a work of art or building) to an original or former condition*”,¹ so any addition, removal or changes cannot be restoration. In Galatians 1:6-8 Apostle Paul defends the gospel, which had been revealed from Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). Some people were preaching a different gospel: to live eternally with the Heavenly Father, faith in Christ was not enough, Gentile believers had to follow Jewish laws and customs. See Paul gave a strong warning about preaching another gospel.

^{1:6} I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Gal 1:6-8)

Is the gospel taught by the Mormon Church is the same as the gospel Paul taught and now found in our Bibles? To determine the truth about the “Restored” Gospel, we have studied Mormon Church scriptures and official teachings. Let us start with Mormon claims of “fulness of the everlasting gospel,” then move to the gospel taught by the Mormon Church.

I What is the “fulness of the everlasting gospel”?

The Mormon Church teaches that the *Book of Mormon* contains the “fulness of the gospel” (Doctrine & Covenants (D&C) 20:8-9, 42:12- D&C is one of Mormon scriptures) and the *Book of Mormon* contains the “fulness of the everlasting gospel” (D&C 27:5,135:3, the first paragraphs of The “Introduction” to the *Book of Mormon*). The Mormon Church and its top leaders teach that the “fulness of the everlasting gospel “is the same as the “fulness of the gospel”, and means *the teachings and the priesthood* (D&C 84:19), which if accepted, will lead a person to exaltation in the highest level of the celestial kingdom, *i.e., becoming a god*.

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth president of the Mormon Church taught,

By fullness of the gospel is meant all the ordinances and principles that pertain to the exaltation in the celestial kingdom. (Doctrine of Salvation, vol.1.p.160)

At this point we are not clear about the gospel taught by the Mormon Church. What is the Gospel in Mormonism?

II What is the gospel?

The Mormon Church teaches that the gospel is “God’s plan of salvation, made possible through the Atonement of Jesus Christ” and the gospel “includes the eternal truth of the laws, covenants, and ordinances needed for mankind to return to the presence of God” (Preach My Gospel-A Guide to Missionary Service, 2004. p.70).

The Third “Article of Faith” in the *Pearl and Great Price* (one of Mormon Church scriptures) says, “We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”

Gospel Principles (2009, pp.277-278), an official Mormon teaching manual, teaches the details of the “restored” gospel.

Requirements for Exaltation

The time to fulfill the requirements for exaltation is now (see Alma34:32–34). President Joseph Fielding Smith said, “In order to obtain the exaltation we must accept the gospel and all its covenants; and take upon us the obligations which the Lord has offered; and walk in the light and the understanding of the truth; and ‘live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God’ ” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:43).

The same page teaches there are 5 “certain” ordinances and 10 “required” ordinances to be exalted.

(See http://www.lds.org/languages/pdf/gospelprinciples/GP_2010_Unit09_49_47_Exaltation__eng_.pdf)

The Mormon Church also teaches that grace is God’s enabling power that allows people to “lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts” (LDS Bible Dictionary, p.697- The Holy Bible, 1987 LDS edition). Grace is granted after our deeds demonstrate our worthiness.

... it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:23 from the *Book of Mormon*, a Mormon scripture)

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (emphasis added) (Moroni 10:32 from the *Book of Mormon*)

Grace is granted to men proportionately as they conform to the standards of personal righteousness that are part of the gospel plan. (Bruce R.McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p.339)²

By contrast, **the Bible teaches that the gospel is the message of Jesus’ death and bodily resurrection for the forgiveness of sins** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) **and the gospel is the “gospel of the grace³ of God”** (Acts 20:24). By grace alone, apart from self-righteous

works, if we confess our sins, God will forgive **all** our sins and make us worthy to live in His presence (Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 3:5-6, 1 John 1:7-9) .

^{2:8} *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of your yourselves; it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ 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)

^{1:6} *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:6-9)

Apostle Paul preached a gospel that centred on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (1Cor.15:1-4). The Gospel Paul taught was not "laws and ordinances of the Gospel." He preached the gospel of grace which excludes meritorious works.

And if by grace, then it is no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace. (Romans 11: 6)

According to Moroni 10:32, before grace is granted you must become sinless on your own. If you could become sinless on your own, why would you need grace? ⁴

According to late Mormon Apostle McConkie, the more righteous you are, the more grace will be granted, and the less righteous you are, the less grace will be given. ⁵ This teaching directly opposes biblical teaching.

Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

(Romans 5:20)

Grace is terribly misunderstood in Mormon thinking. Many Mormons say, "Other Christians say that they are saved by grace alone then do all sorts of wicked things." Apostle Paul anticipates that sort of objection. "*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead into sin, live any longer therein?*"(Romans 6:1-2) (See Galatians 2:17). A person who has died with Christ (Galatians 2:20) is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). So we must not continue to live under sin's dominion. God saves us but does he leave us as we are? No. God has a plan and purpose for our lives.

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: 10)

^{3:7} *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ 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 3:7-8)

Paul taught that repentance and faith were all needed to receive God's gift of forgiveness. But the new teachers (the Judaizers) insisted that non-Jewish converts must also be circumcised and observe the Jewish law. The Galatian believers were following this new position. They were, in fact, deserting the gospel of grace. They were mixing grace and works. For those people who mix grace with works, "Christ shall profit you nothing." (Gal.5:2) Any other gospel which required sinners to work for their own salvation means rejection of grace. Notice Paul's strong words to the bringers of any other gospel, "let him be accursed." (Gal.1:8) The gospel in Mormonism does not centre on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor.15:1-3) but on the person and works of the sinful man. ⁶ The *Book of Mormon* which denies the gospel of grace is another gospel, which is not a gospel at all. Interestingly, In 3 Nephi 11:39-40 from the *Book of Mormon*, Jesus allegedly gave the warning to anyone who adds to or take away from his doctrine. ⁷

We conclude that God has already told us about the Book of Mormon in Galatians 1:6-9 (See 2 Corinthians 11:4). The *fulness of the gospel*, as taught by the Mormon Church and its top leaders is neither in the Bible nor the Book of Mormon. The Mormon Church's use of jargon has complicated the understanding of the concepts involved. Once they are understood, it becomes evident that the Mormon Church and its top leaders teach a different gospel and a different Jesus Christ. The real Gospel of the real Biblical Jesus Christ is simple, even a child can understand it.

1 www.thefreedictionary.com/restored

2 McConkie was a general authority of the Mormon Church when he wrote this book, later he became a Mormon apostle.

General authority is the title for the Mormon Church leaders who are delegated administrative authority by the President of the Mormon Church. Apostles are a level with 11 others men just under the top leader (the Prophet) of the Mormon church and his two counselors.

3 Grace is "undeserved blessing freely bestowed on man by God." - P.H.Huges, ed. Walter Ewell, "Grace" in "Evangelical Dictionary of Theology" (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1994) p.479

4 John Farkas & David Reed, *Mormons- How to Witness to Them*, (Grand Rapids, Baker House, 1997) pp.107-108

5 James R. White, p.269 *Letters to a Mormon Elder* (Minneapolis, Bethany House Publishing, 1993) p.270

6 James R. White, p.263

7 3 Nephi 11:39-40 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. ⁴⁰ And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. "