

Mormonism--History

- 1820s New York—Second Great Awakening, “burnt over district”
- 14 year old Joseph Smith prays to know which church is true, visited by Father and Jesus who declare that all Christian churches are wrong, creeds an abomination, leaders corrupt
- 1823—Another vision of angel Moroni—some Jews had escaped the capture of Jerusalem by coming to America—gold plates a record of ancient American people, Smith chosen to retrieve them



Mormonism--History

- 1827—Entrusted with gold plates written in “Reformed Egyptian”
- 1829—Joined by Oliver Cowdery, visited by John the Baptist, receives Aaronic priesthood
- 1830—Smith founds “Church of Christ”
- Movement travels to Independence, MO—Smith prophesies that temple will be built there, initiating the millennial reign of Christ
- This never happened, Mormons forced to leave



Mormonism--History

- Hostilities and violence followed the Mormons
- Commerce/Nauvoo, IL—LDS flood in, Smith places city under martial law
- Smith arrested and jailed in Carthage, mob storms jail, Smith killed in fight
- Brigham Young becomes new leader, leads Mormons to Salt Lake City, UT
- 1852—Young institutes plural marriage which was officially abolished in 1890



Mormonism--History

- Mormonism develops elaborate church structure—priesthoods, apostles, 70, etc
- Mormons view their history as a persecuted movement, Smith as a prophet in the tradition of rejected prophets of Bible



Mormonism—Overview

- God has a physical body, perfected and glorified
- God was once a man on earth but overcame problems
- “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become”
- John 4:24 mistranslated
- Jesus the literal offspring of God
- Jesus and Lucifer were God’s children
- Every earth has its Jesus



Mormonism—Overview

- Preexistence—we are eternal spirit beings whose choices in former (eternal) life determine circumstances we are born into
- Fall was not a tragic event, but a vital and planned step in our progression
- Adam and Eve were not mortal—in the fall they change to mortality and other preexistent spirits can too



Mormonism—Overview

- Apostasy occurred because no revelation or priesthood authority after NT
- Priesthood necessary to administer ordinances of life and salvation
- Book of Mormon teaches that the Bible has been corrupted
- Bible can be trusted only “as far as it is translated correctly”



Mormonism—Overview

- Specific works are required for salvation/progression/exaltation, including baptism and faithfully living by the gospel (obedience)
- Temples—must be worthy
- Marriage and family are eternal
- Baptism for the dead



Mormonism—Toward Understanding

Common ground:

- Focus on holy living, seriousness
- Baptism essential
- Criticism of denominational practices, creeds
- Emphasis on family



Mormonism—Toward Understanding

- Mormon perspective hinges on being outsiders, persecuted, misunderstood
- Mormonism holds answers to many thorny theological questions—where North American peoples came from, where God came from, virgin birth, which church is “true”



Mormonism--Engaging

- The main issue: Is the Bible the authority?
- Mormons acknowledge Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine and Covenants—as well as the Bible properly translated
- But if these things are in conflict, Mormons will side with their books
- How could God allow the Bible to become corrupted? Why?
- Why should Mormon books interpret the Bible?



Mormonism--Engaging

- Gal 1:8-9 test—is it the same or different? If same, don't need it; if different, not true
- Proof of Joseph Smith's inspiration? Prayer test is not what's given in Bible
- Where is the “prayer test” as a method of discovering truth? (cf Acts 17:11, 1 John 4:1-6, 1 Thess 5:19-21, Jude 3)
- Rather than arguing particular points of Mormon faith, we must engage about the root—if these books are true, then the rest follows

