

“. . . he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.”

—from Galatians 5:10

Mormon Missionaries Want to Talk to You

What they say — and Perspective from the Apostle Paul (page 2)

Young Mormon missionaries by the thousands flow worldwide from training centers, month after month, drilled in elementary teachings of their church and armed with a guide called *Preach My Gospel*. The manual includes four lessons that “the living prophets and apostles have directed” them to teach to non-Mormons.¹

Focused, earnest missionaries are easy to admire, and they can make their teachings attractive. Don’t be fooled. Here is the gist of their lessons.²

The lessons: Four things Mormons want you to believe

1. Dispensations. These days comprise the final dispensation before the return of Christ. The head of this dispensation is the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is the only true church. Its president is the only true prophet of the day. Jesus Christ led an earlier dispensation, which ended a few hundred years after the crucifixion, followed by a “Great Apostasy” when there was no true church or prophet on earth. That apostasy lasted about 1500 years, ending in 1830 when the current dispensation opened under the new Prophet Joseph Smith and the prophets who succeeded him at the head of his church.

2. Plan of salvation. Long before creation all people were adult spirits in heaven but no one could progress without a physical body and the trials, errors, and successes of mortal life. Creation was an early step in the plan of salvation. Spirits who proved themselves worthy of progression earned the right to experience an earth life, beginning with Adam, where each would have opportunity to prove worthy again. Under Adam a Christian church was established (the first dispensation). Periods of apostasy and other dispensations followed. Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Christ headed some of the other dispensations, each ending with removal of the church and true prophets from earth.

In this dispensation, the Mormon prophet holds all the “keys (or authorities) of the priesthood,” controlling access to eternal life, or heaven, or salvation. Missionaries, living and dead, seek to bring all people, dead and alive, the saving message and rituals of the Mormon church.

3. The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of God’s grace and mercy people can be forgiven and cleansed of sin, and live eternally in heaven. Faith, repentance, and water baptism by an authorized Mormon member of the

priesthood are among the requirements to receive the benefits of God’s grace. In the end: “Because of Christ’s Atonement and Resurrection, all people will be brought back into the presence of the Lord to be judged according to their works and desires.” Those who “endure to the end” and “patiently, faithfully, and consistently follow [the strait and narrow path] throughout [their] lives . . . will qualify for eternal life.”

4. Commandments. For Mormons “living the gospel” is a matter of obeying the Ten Commandments and other laws. The church requires a commitment before baptism, then throughout life, to follow the Mormon prophet; obey laws of tithing, fasting, and chastity; and participate as good citizens in civil and community matters. Shopping and sports on Sundays are discouraged. Members are to avoid alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee. A person cannot attain eternal life without the church’s commandments, laws, and ordinances.

The Apostle Paul : Perspective*

...there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth...? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again....

Suggestions

•Read Galatians.

•Consider the similarities:

1. The foolish Galatians (as Paul called them) wanting to adapt Christian faith to the laws-and-works religion of their past. They were “troubled” by an attractive “gospel” (which was not really good news at all) and by zealous teachers of that “gospel.”

2. Christians and others today, who are troubled or impressed by the claims, zeal, and success of Mormons as they preach a new version of the “gospel,” salvation by good intentions and deeds, and exclusive authority.

•Decide now, not later, to “stand fast.” Never succumb to Mormonism or other false gospels.

NOTES. 1. Published by the Mormon church, 2004. Each of the lessons may take about 45 minutes. Missionaries are directed to teach a fifth lesson to Mormons: “Laws and Ordinances,” about the priesthood, missionary work, eternal (temple) marriage, genealogy research and other efforts to help save the dead, service and teaching responsibilities, and (again) enduring to the end. 2. In a simplistic form, the Mormon religion is described at the church’s web site, www.mormon.org. Details that set the church apart from Christianity can be searched out at another church site, www.lds.org.

* From Galatians 1:7; 3:1,3,25; 4:9; 5:1.