

# Topic 17: Mormonism

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**Founded:** 1830 by: Joseph Smith

**Claim:** Angel Moroni led Smith to golden plates in “reformed Egyptian” and stones to help him translate them. Also that God continued to reveal things to him.

**Authorities:** LDS church, *King James Bible*, *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrines and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*.

## Distinctive Beliefs

- God was once a man who was judged worthy to be “exalted” and still has a body.
- Eternal progression
- God “created” the world, only means that He “organized” eternally pre-existing matter.
- Angels and human souls are formed from pre-existing “intelligences” by Heavenly Father and (one of) his heavenly wives.
- Jesus is considered to be the “Son of God” but by that they mean something totally different from what orthodox Christians mean. (1) That he was the *first* spirit child of “Heavenly Father,” and (2) That he is also somehow bodily, “literally,” the son of God the Father.
- They do not pray to Jesus. They do not worship the Holy Spirit but do accept his inspirations.
- The purpose of life is to raise a new generation of “righteous” (Mormons), obey LDS dictates, and spread the faith.
- The reward for men is to become “exalted,” like “Heavenly Father”. Women get to be queens.
- Eternal families

## Two big problems with Mormon theology about God

1. The doctrine of eternal progression means that the gods of Mormonism are all contingent beings, meaning that they did not have to exist.
2. One God vs many gods. One of the major themes of the OT is precisely that there is only one God, cf. Isaiah 44-46.

A more general problem is that their theology is terribly inconsistent, which is not surprising since it keeps changing. Former Mormons say that the attraction of Mormonism is definitely not logical consistency or intellectual conviction but instant community, eternal families, wholesome living, and other emotional or practical draws.

**See the blog for resources on evangelizing Mormons.**

# Topic 18: Jehovah's Witnesses

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**Founded:** 1879 by: Charles Taze Russell

**Claim:** Theirs is the only true Christian organization

**Authorities:** The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the *New World Translation* (NWT) of the Bible

## Distinctive Beliefs

- They say that the “personal name” of the True God is “Jehovah,” to distinguish him from other “gods” and “lords.”
- They are Unitarian in belief and reject the Trinity as a deception of Satan.
- They believe that Christ was Jehovah’s first creation. Russell taught that Christ was Michael the archangel, who gave up his spirit-being and became a man in obedience to God.
- Because their Christ was not God, he did not rise from the dead.
- They also do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a person, let alone a divine person. Rather, Rutherford taught that the Holy Spirit was any power or influence of God.
- The main purpose of life is to evangelize as many people as possible into the JW organization.
- They do not believe that the soul is immortal.
- Those who die before Armageddon will be recreated and given a second chance of salvation during a literal 1000 year millennium of Christ’s kingdom.
- They deny the existence of hell. The truly evil will simply be annihilated.
- They do not permit blood transfusions.
- They teach that only a literal 144,000 plus Christ will rule in heaven. All the other good guys will go to an earthly paradise. No reason is given for why the number is plucked out literally from a figurative passage.
- The NWT, a travesty prepared by men with little to no knowledge of Biblical languages and who altered the Scriptures to support their doctrines, is the only Bible they accept.

## Talking to JWs

- Arguing specific doctrines should be left to those who have really studied up on it.
- Most of us should stick with a simpler approach that focuses on the key issue of Authority.
- **Please see the class blog for more details and resources on evangelizing JWs!**