

## Live Peaceably with All -- Mormon Faith and Practices

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February 5, 2020

International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP) during World Summit 2020



So as was mentioned, I work at the University of Las Vegas. I've been working with the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles as I'm their faculty advisor on campus. We've held numerous events on campus about sexual integrity; Peace Starts with Me, and all those types of things. It started about three years ago. I have been super privileged to work with your young people, and we've actually had them work with our young people who belong to the institute, so they've been doing things collaboratively together. I'm super blessed to have been brought into this community, and now I get to share my theology with you. My theology is pretty simple: I am a child of God, and so are you.

Our purpose on earth is to return to our Heavenly Parents and the celestial kingdom of heaven and

have joy with them. In order to understand my theology, you have to understand the canon of scriptures that I call the "standard works." *The Book of Mormon* was a book that was given to Joseph Smith, a prophet, that was on gold plates that he translated. It contains the history of the people who lived on the American continent. The King James version of the Bible is pretty standard; it's used throughout the world. We also have a book called *The Doctrine and Covenants*, which contains the administration for our church, the things we do, and how we're organized. Another book we use called *The Pearl of Great Price*. That book was papyrus fragments that Joseph translated.

### Church organization and history

We believe that the structure of our church follows the same structure that Jesus Christ organized with apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers. We have seven areas of authority, that we call stakes and wards. Other auxiliaries were created over time under the direction of Joseph. He appointed his wife Emma Hale Smith, who organized the Relief Society, which was the oldest women's organization in the United States and played a significant role in getting voting rights for women in the United States. Women have played huge roles in our church from the very beginning. Emma was the president.

Other presidents succeeded her. They realized there was a need for a primary organization, and they established that in 1878. And again in 1912, they realized that college students need a little bit of help, and high school students need a little bit of help, so in 1912 they created a seminary for high school students and 1926 they created an institute. So our young people in Las Vegas get up at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. They study scripture before they go to school, and then they go to school. And they do it joyfully. My daughter gets up twenty minutes earlier to spend time with her friends, talking to them, before seminary in the morning. I can tell you that was not the case for me. I rolled out of bed and went to seminary. But she gets up earlier.

There were witnesses to *The Book of Mormon*, eleven in total. Three of those witnesses were shown *The Book of Mormon* by an angel and saw the gold plates. The other eight were shown them by Joseph Smith. None of those witnesses ever denied their testimony even though many left the church. God and Jesus answered Joseph's prayer because he asked a question. The question came when he was reading in James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." When God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph, they told him not to join any religion that existed on earth, which was not what Joseph thought he would receive. They commanded him to start the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And that's what he did.

### Belief in Jesus and respect for faith

Now we believe all religions have truth. We believe science has truth. Truth, in the church, for us, comes through revelation. I receive revelation, you receive revelation, through prayer; we all do. But for us, the prophet receives the revelation for the church. We receive revelation for our families. And we live in what we call the "fullness of times" where simple truths that were lost have now been revealed. We believe Jesus Christ is our savior. We are Christians. We believe Jesus is the literal son of a living God. He atoned for the sins of the world in the garden of Gethsemane. He gave his life on the cross that we might all live again. He was conceived of a virgin birth through the power of the Holy Ghost. The purpose of God was to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of men. We believe that we will be punished for our own sins and not for Adam's transgressions, but that we can repent through the atonement of Christ.

God created this plan of salvation in what we call the pre-mortal life, that our spirits existed with our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Mother before we came to earth. And the purpose of coming to this earth was to obtain a body, to return to and become like our Father in Heaven. But while we are here, Jesus would have to come and be born. Because in this plan, in the pre-existence, there were two, Jesus and Lucifer. And Lucifer wanted to force us to do what he wanted and to bring us back to God, that we would not have a choice. Lucifer would force us to choose the right. And God did not choose Lucifer's plan. Jesus came to God and said, "I will go with your plan. And I will give you the glory." Lucifer wanted his own plan and his own glory. But in that pre-mortal world, Jesus said, "I will go down to earth, and I will atone for the sins of man as you wanted, and you can have all the glory.'

### **Dispensations and apostasies**

Faith has taught me how we have existed. We've always existed. My faith taught me that. We've existed before I was born, and we always will. Faith taught me that, but science confirmed it. Because you can't create or destroy matter, only change what it was. When we die, our belief is that our spirit leaves our body and journeys to the spirit world. And when we are resurrected, our spirit will then be reunited with our body. This plan of salvation required for Adam and Eve to come into the garden. Had they not fallen they would have remained in the garden forever. Having known joy, because they knew no misery, they would have remained in a state of innocence, like children, doing only good and knowing no sin. Lucifer wanted to take that agency and glory. But Jesus offered to be our savior and give the glory to the Father. We talk about dispensations and apostasies. The first dispensation we believe began with Adam, and that dispensation... Some of the children didn't agree with Adam's teachings and we call that apostasy. So Enoch came as a prophet and was given keys to restoring the truth that had been lost through apostasy. The same happened with Noah, Abraham and Moses, until the sixth dispensation, with Jesus Christ. When he came in the meridian of time to restore the truth that had been lost, that final dispensation, the seventh dispensation, we believe, began with Joseph Smith, who was given keys to restore the gospel to the earth.

Some of those truths that were restored are that God the Father and Jesus Christ are resurrected, glorified men. Joseph received the priesthood, we call it the Aaronic priesthood, the preparatory priesthood, and the Melchizedek priesthood is the priesthood of the sacrament of Melchizedek had. [Melchizedek is the ancient Canaanite priest-king of Jerusalem who blessed Abraham.] The difference between the two is that the Aaronic priesthood handles tangible things. They bless the sacrament, they take the sacrament and they collect fast offerings from the members. The Melchizedek priesthood is the spiritual priesthood. It's the one through which we give blessings to the sick to heal them. They are anointings. We have patriarchs that give blessings that are recorded in the church. We believe in love and chastity; we have no sexual relations unless it is with our husband or wife to whom we are legally and lawfully wedded.

### **Some Mormon practices**

We pay tithes and offerings. We call it the Law of Tithing. There's also something called the Law of Consecration. Currently, we don't all like the Law of Consecration. Some members do. Most live the Law of Tithing. As tithing, we give ten percent. In the Law of Consecration, we give everything.

Temples are important. [Building them] is what we do to link the generations. When I say that I am born in the covenant, it means that my mother and father were sealed in the temple for time and all eternity, and that sealing links us all together back to Father Adam and Mother Eve. I don't believe that Adam and Eve are Gods. They are our earthly parents, Father Adam and Mother Eve. Our true parents, for me, the ones I believe are my parents are Elohim God and his wife, whose name we don't mention because we don't know it, but we know she exists.

One thing I know is that if we are not one, we are not his. We invite all to come into Christ and rejoice in the fullness of his restored gospel. Our faith is international. Everywhere I go, every country I go to, in every country that allows us to come, we have a congregation. We are united, and we are one. We want to be one with everyone.

### **Personal history**

I'll tell you a story in my remaining time. My family history is Swedish, English and Swiss. It goes back for multiple generations. My Swedish grandmother immigrated to the United States and could not speak English. When she immigrated, her son was taken from her, because [the people who took him] said he was too smart to become a Mormon. She was told that if she went to court, she could get him back. And she did. They threatened her, saying that if her husband came, he would be murdered. So she went without him. She got her son. She took him, and on the way back to give him back to his father, they kidnapped the boy again.

They migrated to the West without their child. This is my ancestry. My people were raped, murdered, killed, and driven from the east coast of the United States to the west coast. The United States government sent an army to kill my people. And on the fourth of July when the army came, the man in charge disobeyed a direct order because the people were celebrating the fourth of July [US Independence Day.] He said if these people aren't patriots, I don't know who are. And he left. Thank you for this time.