

Message #45 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"Some Answers to Mormonism"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. And thanks again to those who have requested CDs and transcripts. We really look forward to opening the mail and seeing that people are interested in our program. Remember that the CDs and transcripts are free, and if you write to us requesting them, please feel free to include any questions you may have. We like all kinds of Bible questions; general or specific. And if you liked a particular message, and would just like to get a copy of it to give to someone else, that would be fine. We just want people to benefit from our messages. So, please feel free to request them and to ask questions.

Well, let's go on with today's message. Today I'd like to talk about some of the concepts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or as many refer to it, the Mormon church. I've received some questions, and would like to answer them on the program for the benefit of all our listeners, but I will keep the name of the person asking the questions confidential.

The first question asked was concerning prophets. In the Mormon church, The President, who is also referred to as the Chief Apostle, is the only person who is considered to be able to speak divinely to the whole world. Prophecy is accepted for individuals in the church, but only for personal revelation. Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of Mormonism, is considered by Mormons to have been the initial prophet, and who could speak divinely for the whole world. The question asked was, "If there were prophets in the Old Testament, why can't there be prophets in the Mormon church?" My answer is this.

I do believe that we still have prophets. But in all the history of the Old Testament, no man was ever designated a prophet by tradition, or by the appointment of another man or group of men. God is the only one who can call a man to be a prophet. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nathan, etc., were called by God. They may have been of the priesthood class, as was Jeremiah, or they may have been a shepherd, as was Amos. In each case they were called by God. When a man prophesies, he does it by the power of the Holy Spirit. No man or woman can be designated a prophet by other men and then automatically start being an oracle (a mouthpiece) of God. In Catholicism, they have the same type of tradition. They pass on authority from one Pope to another, being elected by the hierarchy of cardinals. The chief guy assumes the power on earth to speak God's will for people, and the people believe that whatever he speaks from the Throne of Peter is the absolute word of God, just because of his position, even though it was his own group that put him in that position. However, God doesn't pass his power for prophesying to the next man by using a system of whoever is elected to the chief seats of different religions. The only way anyone can speak prophetically is by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can and will move anyone he desires to move. We can see this in 1 Corinthians 12:11.

I know it may be difficult to comprehend that God doesn't reserve the gifts of the Holy Spirit just for the elite of a denomination, but in the Bible it tells us that God will pour out his spirit onto all flesh. In Joel 2:28, it refers to a promise from God that will come upon all flesh, and that sons and daughters will prophesy. In 1 Corinthians 14:31, the Bible tells us that in a meeting of the church, all can prophesy. All, means more than just one or two who are designated by the church hierarchy. This may be difficult for some of you, but I prophesy. And I'm no big thing. God uses who he wants to use. The gift of prophecy was given to the church along with the other gifts of the Spirit in order that the church might be strengthened and grow. 1 Corinthians 14:3, tells us that when a person prophesies, he is speaking words that will edify the church. This building up of the church may also be by exhortation, exhorting the people toward an action or attitude that God sees that they need. It may also be comfort. Then, as the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:29, prophecy, in a gathering of the church, should be restrained. It should not be one after another continuously, but after a maximum of two or three, there should be ample time for the others to consider what was said so that they can judge the value of the prophesies for themselves. Also, in verse 31, it clarifies this, showing that all (everyone) can prophesy if they are moved by the Holy Spirit to do so. This is Bible scripture, and the concept of only the chief men of the hierarchy of a church being prophets is contrary to scripture. And notice that women are also included in those who receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, for Joel 2:28 prophesies that both sons and daughters will prophesy. Also, Deborah, in the Old Testament and Anna in the New Testament were referred to as prophetesses. And just a note: In 1 Corinthians 14:5, Paul tells us that he thinks it would be great for everyone to speak in tongues. But he would rather that everyone prophesied, because the prophesying builds up the church, the body of Christ.

I personally cannot accept being part of any assembly that quenches the moving of the Holy Spirit when the Spirit wants us to be moved to act or speak according to God's will. To tell the people that they are just little people and that only the chief ones can be used by the Holy Spirit

in certain gifts is not according to Bible scripture. Satan is always trying to turn scripture around and make it ineffective. That's what happens to God's word when men begin to add to it.

Well, that was question number one. Here's the next one, which refers to Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of the Mormon church. The question is, "Why isn't it right to follow the words of Joseph Smith, Jr., and yet it is alright to follow the words of Paul, Moses, John, etc., weren't they just men also, before they became prophets and apostles?" My answer to this is that nowhere in God's word does it ever tell people to follow the words of men, whether it is Joseph Smith, Jr., or Peter, Paul, and Timothy. Even the prophets were only oracles of God, and the Bible also makes it very clear that there were also false prophets. We can't trust men. We were never meant to take the words of Moses or Paul or John or anyone as truth. Truth doesn't come just because a man speaks some words. One thing to keep in mind is that God has always warned us against following false prophets, and at the same time has required us to follow the words of true prophets? When you think about this, you see that we, ourselves, are responsible for who we believe. And in order to believe, we must believe the truth, and not the lie. If you believe everything that a man says just because he, or someone else, refers to him as a "prophet," then you are following a man. That man is your authority. That man is taking the place of God as Father, and you are calling that man your authority, your father, like an earthly father is a child's authority. Matthew 23:8-10, explains that no man is supposed to be looked to as your teacher or father in heavenly matters. An earthly father has authority over our flesh when we are growing up, but it is only the Heavenly Father who is to be the authority over our spiritual understanding. We accept men as teachers only in the sense that they tell us what they feel God is leading them to teach us. Then we pray and ask God to reveal the truth to us. It is this aspect of praying and asking for the truth to be revealed to us that is so important. We can't rely on man for our truth, but can only rely on God. The problem with the world, and the reason that Satan has been able to bring confusion to the word of God through all the different religious options, is that people don't look to God for the revelation knowledge. They don't pray that God will reveal the truth to them, but they rely on what men tell them, and accept it as truth, without ever looking to God to reveal the truth.

Jesus Christ is the Word of God. He is God. God's word is truth. God became a man in order to reveal himself to humankind. Jesus is God in the flesh, God's revealed Word, giving testimony that God's word is actually true, and that he really is a righteous God, just as he says. The Holy Spirit is the testimony on earth that demonstrates that God's claim to omnipotence (almighty, all powerful), is true. Jesus said, "The truth shall set you free." It is not assumption of truth that will set you free from your debt of sin to God, but truth. It is God's word, the truth, that is the ONLY way to salvation. In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except by me." The reason that Jesus said he was the only way to the Father, is because he, Jesus, is the truth. He is the Word. He is God's word. It is only God's word that will set us free. Lots of people assume that if Jesus is the way to the Father, than all they have to do is to believe Jesus is the Son of God, and that he died for our sins. But salvation is not by believing just this. Even Satan knows that Jesus is the Son of God, and Satan also knows very well that Jesus died for the sins of people. But this doesn't mean Satan is saved. In the same

sense, the people of earth can't be saved just by believing part of the truth, but must believe all the truth that God reveals to them. As we read about Jesus Christ, the words he spoke on earth and the deeds he did, we see God. We see the Father in a way the people of the Old Testament were unable to see Him. We come to know the Word of God, because Jesus is the Word of God. When we come to know Jesus, we come to know the Father through His Word. John 1:1, says, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." We see that Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is God's word, and God's word is truth, therefore Jesus is the truth, just as he claimed to be.

You see, I don't follow Moses or Paul, any more than I would follow Joseph Smith, Jr. I listen to everything that comes my way, and then I pray and ask God to reveal the truth of their words, so that He Himself will be revealed to me. I want to know the Heavenly Father. I don't want to know someone who is just a concept of some man's imagination. I want to know God himself, and I want to know him for real, not just some man's personal comprehension of God.

So, how do you come to know someone? It's not just by a good feeling. You wouldn't marry someone based on just a wonderful feeling, although many people have tried it and found out too late how bad it is. That's why there is a dating period. It's also not just by their words. If it was, you would believe everything everybody says. Even Jesus said that if there were not the other two witnesses besides himself that gave testimony that he was the Truth, then the truth that he is the Son of God and God in the flesh could not be established. He says in John 5:31, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." Can you imagine anything that Jesus said as not being true? But Jesus, himself, said that his testimony of himself could not be established by himself, but only when the testimony of the Father and the Holy Spirit is included. This threefold testimony is the three witnesses which can testify to matters concerning life and death. In the Old Testament, no man was to be condemned to death because of one witness. But only by the testimony of two or three witnesses was the man to be condemned. This established rule comes from the concept of the Trinity. God is one God, but in three persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is one thing to hear something spoken, even by God himself, but nothing is established just by the testimony of one.

But God, in his triune existence is able to testify of himself as Father, and then he testifies of himself as the Son of God, and then he testifies of himself as the Holy Spirit. The testimony of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all proven to be true because the other two witnesses join with the first witness, and the truth is established. If it is the Father's words which are spoken or written, then Jesus and Holy Spirit both give witness that the words of the Father are true. It is the same thing if the words of Jesus are spoken or written, for then the Father and the Holy Spirit testify that Jesus' words are true. And if it is the Holy Spirit that is moving, then the words of the Father and the words of Jesus both testify that the Holy Spirit is true, for the moving of the Spirit is shown to be in alignment with both the testimony of the Father and the testimony of the Son.

This concept of three witnesses is important. For we see in John 8:33, that it is the truth which sets us free, and the testimony of only one person is not sufficient to determine a matter of life or death. It isn't a very good feeling that sets us free. It is the truth which sets us free. Mormons are encouraged to go to God and ask him to reveal to them whether or not the Mormon religion is the true religion. They are then told to expect an overwhelming feeling of peace and love, and that this will be the sign from God that they really do have the truth. This may be a great start, but if you don't continue with this through all three witnesses, you haven't got it. It isn't just a good feeling that will set you free. The Holy Spirit certainly does give us direction in our spirit, but we need to take this as an indication that God is going to reveal the rest of it. God is not revealed just by feelings, but by the testimony of God the Father, and the testimony of God the Son, and thirdly by the testimony of God the Holy Spirit. If a good feeling of peace and love was all that was needed, many people's religions would qualify. A prime example of this is the Moonies, who freely testify that they are overwhelmed with feelings of peace and love. When it comes to believing someone who says they have the truth, you can't just accept one over the other. I don't dare take a chance on a man when it comes to a matter of eternal life or death. It is important for life and death in the flesh to have at least two or three witnesses in order to establish the truth. But how much more important it is to establish the truth of the testimony when the life or death at stake is eternal, for even Satan presents himself deceptively as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, says, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

Well, we may have time for one more question. Here it is. The question is, "Do you believe that if you're baptized by any church are you baptized correctly?" The answer to this is, "no!" There are lots of people who are baptized by many different churches and many different ways. But baptism, whether it is being baptized with water or with the Holy Spirit, is not successful just because the person goes through the baptismal rite. Baptism is a response to the calling of God. In essence, God says, "You are not living as I desire you to live. I have a different path that I want you to take. You must repent. You must stop going the way you are currently going, and go in the way that I will direct you."

This is the basic concept of baptism. It is accepting the call of God, and turning away from that which you were first doing. People sin. When God calls them, they repent, meaning that they turn away from their sinful living, and follow after God. To be baptized is to signify that you are crucifying the old nature of the flesh and that you will no longer live for your own purposes, but will then live for God. In baptism, you go under the water in order to signify the death of the old sinful nature of self determination, and when the person comes up out of the water it signifies the "being born again" experience whereby the person has a new spirit nature which now is determined to follow the leading of God's Holy Spirit rather than the spirits that would move them to selfishness and wickedness. In the same sense, when Jesus was talking to James and John in Matthew 20:22 & 23, he explained that James and John would have to receive a future baptism. Notice that this was after Jesus and his apostles had been baptized, but that Jesus was

telling James and John that they would be baptized with the baptism that he, Jesus, had been baptized with. Jesus was just explaining that a baptism is an acceptance of a call from God which will be different from the life they were then living. The baptism that they would accept in the near future would be to be the apostles of Jesus Christ, and spread the Gospel to those of the earth who were the walking dead. In return, Jesus was alluding to the future martyrdom of James and John, and to their great persecution for carrying the gospel to the world. This calling is a baptism.

We each have been called, not only to turn from sin and follow after righteousness, but we each also receive a particular calling from God of which we can choose to accept and do His will, or we can ignore it and do our own will. Baptism, when done correctly, has little to do with the church or the person performing the ritual, but has everything to do with believing God's word. Many people think that the only thing they have to believe is that Jesus is Christ. But Satan knows that. What people have to believe is what God reveals to them. And if God attempts to reveal truth and understanding, but the people reject the Truth for a good feeling or a doctrine which is inappropriate to God's will, then the person really didn't accept the calling of God after all. The person didn't really get baptized for real, but only got wet. Unless the old man dies, unless the way the person was living is changed into what God is calling them to, then baptism didn't really take place.

Many people are baptized in water, but have no real intent to serve God. They want to go to heaven, but they don't want to turn away from the things of earth. They still go after things which will stimulate their fleshly man, and bring that old man back up. In essence, many people go under the water, but the old man isn't really put to death. They think they can live both lives at the same time. They think they can enjoy earthly desires and still be acceptable in God's sight. And it isn't the ritual of being baptized in a pool of water that makes the difference. The water baptism is just the outward testimony of what the person intends to do for God. The real baptism is what takes place in the heart. God looks on the heart, not on the outward part of the man. A person can talk a good talk and walk what appears to be a fairly good walk on the outside, but as it says in 1 Samuel 16:7, God looks on the heart. When Jesus Christ returns in the clouds of heaven, it won't be the people who only experienced water baptism who will rise to meet him in the air. It will be those who's hearts were changed, and who worshiped God with all their heart, all their soul, and with all their strength. There are going to be a lot of people who will weep and gnash their teeth when they see the King of Glory appear in the clouds of heaven. As it says in Matthew 7:17-23, there will be many who profess to serve Jesus Christ, and to do the will of God, but unless they have truly been baptized for real in their heart, they will be rejected.

Well, that's all we have time for this week. Hope you can be with us. Until then, God bless!