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**What Do Latter-day Saints and Muslims Have in Common? - Part 2**  
*A Christian Evaluation Of Muslims and Latter-day Saints: Beliefs, Values, and Lifestyles*  
By Tal Davis

In Part One of this four part series we related that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormons) recently released a pamphlet comparing and contrasting seventeen points of its faith with that of the Muslims. (Read the LDS pamphlet titled *Muslims and Latter-day Saints: Beliefs, Values, and Lifestyles* online here:

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/muslims-and-latter-day-saints?lang=eng>)

We commended the LDS saying that it is good for various religious groups to seek to better understand each other's beliefs and practices. But we also said that the pamphlet does not explain in any real depth the beliefs of Islam or Mormonism. The pamphlet primarily deals with the religions' commonalities but only touches on the vast differences between those two religions.

It also fails to explain how both faiths' teachings differ drastically from Historic Christian beliefs. Therefore, in this four part series, we are reviewing the pamphlet. and providing an evangelical Christian analysis of its contents regarding both Islam and Mormonism. The pamphlet breaks the comparisons into seventeen points. In part one we examined the first four: Point One: Mutual Respect; Point Two: Profession of Faith in God; Point Three: The Posterity of Abraham; and Point Four: Prophets. (Read Part One here: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2022/02/what-do-latter-day-saints-and-muslims-have-in-common-part-1-tal-davis/> )

In this part two, we look carefully at points five through nine: (5) Jesus Christ; (6) Scriptures; (7) Prayer; (8) Helping Those in Need; and (9) Fasting.

In Part Three we will analyze points ten through thirteen: (10) Physical Health; (11) Chastity; (12) the Role of Women; and (13) Family.

In Part Four we survey points fourteen through seventeen: (14) Holy Places; (15) Life After Death; (16) Humanity; and (17) Religious Diversity.

So let's continue with our evaluations. (The text of the LDS pamphlet is featured in italics)

**(Note on Acronyms - 1) SAW:** Acronym for the Arabic phrase "prayers and peace be upon him," which Muslims use after they say the name of the Prophet Muhammad. **2) AS:** Acronym for the Arabic phrase "upon him be peace," which Muslims use after they say the name of prophets like Abraham.)

**Point Five: Jesus Christ**

*Muslims and Latter-day Saints share many beliefs about Jesus Christ. He plays an important, though different, role for both groups.*

*Both Muslims and Latter-day Saints believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. They recognize that He is a messenger of God ("Word") and refer to Him as the Messiah or Al-Masih (the "Anointed One"). Both acknowledge that He performed miracles during His lifetime, and both accept that He can make intercession for the righteous at the Day of Judgment.*

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### Muslims

*Muslims regard Jesus Christ (AS) as the sinless son of Mary, uniquely having a mother but no father (see Qur'an 3:59). He was a prophet of God but not the son of God. God strengthened him with the Holy Spirit (see Qur'an 2:87). He prophesied the coming of Muhammad. He was raised unto God alive before his enemies could kill him on the cross. Most Muslims believe that Jesus (AS) will return at the last days to help restore global peace and justice on earth.*

### Latter-day Saints

*Latter-day Saints regard Jesus Christ as the sinless, Only Begotten Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. His suffering in the garden and death on the cross atone for the sins of all who accept His grace. He overcame death and enabled the eventual resurrection and immortality of all people (see Book of Mormon, Alma 7:9-13). In the last days He will return to usher in a thousand years of peace. Then He will judge all humanity according to their faith and good works, and by the intent of their hearts.*

### Analysis

From the Historic Christian perspective, this may be the most important point of all. For what one believes about Jesus, that is, who He was and what He did, is critical for one's receiving eternal life.

The LDS pamphlet presents the Islamic perspective on Jesus in a concise and accurate manner. Yes, Muslims do believe Jesus was sinless and was born of the Virgin Mary. That is about the full extent of the commonalities of the Islamic and LDS positions and, more significantly, its comparison to the Historic Christian position.

The Islamic statement says that Jesus was just "a prophet of God

*but not the son of God."* That simple statement expresses well the vast divide between Islam and Christianity. Christians believe Jesus was much more than just another prophet, He was indeed, the One and Only Son of God. The Bible indicates that Jesus was the Second Person of the Eternal Trinity, God the Son, who existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit from all eternity before the creation of the world. Islam also asserts that Jesus "prophesied the coming of Muhammad." There is no indication that Jesus ever predicted, or saw any need for, another prophet like Muhammad.

The Islamic statement also says that "He was raised unto God alive before his enemies could kill him on the cross." We need to carefully scrutinize all of what this sentence conveys. First, it clearly asserts that, in Islamic teaching, Jesus did not die on the cross. That basically negates what, for Christians, is the foundation of human salvation: Christ's sacrificial death for sin. Second, it implies that Jesus, since He did not die, was not raised bodily from the dead. This essentially invalidates the primary historical evidence for Jesus' Messiahship and our basis for life after death.

Thus we can see that the Islamic view of who Jesus was and what He did is contrary to what the Bible teaches and Christians believe. It also is contrary to what the LDS teaches about Jesus, which is also in major conflict with Historic Christian theology. For that reason we need to carefully analyze the LDS position as stated above. A surface reading of the LDS paragraph might appear to most Christians as in full alignment with Historic Christian doctrine. But when we delve more deeply into the Mormon definitions of the terms we get a completely different conclusion.

To start with, the statement says nothing about what the LDS believes about Jesus' pre-existence. It teaches that all

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humans had a life before physical birth in a spirit world where they were procreated by the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. Jesus, whose name was then Jehovah, was the firstborn child of the heavenly couple in the pre-existence. Somehow, while still in His pre-existent state, Jehovah was able to attain godhood. He volunteered to be born on earth as Jesus to make atonement for Adam and Eve's sin, which the LDS believes brought on universal mortality.

The first sentence reads "*Latter-day Saints regard Jesus Christ as... sinless.*" True, Jesus was sinless. However, when the LDS says He was the "*Only Begotten Son of God, born of the virgin Mary*" it means it quite literally. In historic Mormon teachings, Jesus was not conceived by the Holy Spirit, but literally by the "Heavenly Father." Remember, in Mormonism, God is an exalted man with a body of flesh and bones. When the LDS says "*Only Begotten Son of God,*" it literally means in the flesh. Thus Jesus was the physical son of the Heavenly Father and Mary. Bible scholars know that the phrase "*Only Begotten Son*" (as in John 3:16 KJV) is better translated from Greek as "*One and Only Son*" (*Huion ton Monogene*). This is how it reads in most modern English Bible versions. The phrase has no denotation regarding Jesus' physical birth, who was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit. It attests to the uniqueness of Christ's eternal relationship to the Father. Also, when the LDS says "*born of the virgin Mary,*" we have to ask if she remained a virgin if she was impregnated by a physical man.

Another point in this LDS statement reads: "*His suffering in the garden and death on the cross atone for the sins of all who accept His grace.*" It is important to understand that in Mormon theology, Jesus' atonement for sins was accomplished primarily by

His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, and only finished on the cross. Furthermore, in Mormonism, Jesus' atonement restored immortality to *all* humanity regardless of their faith: "*He overcame death and enabled the eventual resurrection and immortality (lost in the Fall of Adam and Eve) of all people.*" This is a form of universalism. However, in LDS soteriology (doctrine of salvation), the full degree of one's ultimate salvation is dependent, not on Jesus' work, but on his or her being an active and obedient member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – keeping the church's moral laws and performing all its required temple rites and rituals (see "Life After Death" in Part Four of this series).

## Point Six: Scriptures

*For Muslims and Latter-day Saints, revelation from God given through messengers as scripture is the foundation for learning God's will, keeping commitments, and participating in faithful worship.*

## Muslims

*Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the word of God and His final revelation to humankind. The Qur'an communicates God's will, teaching how to stay on the path that brings salvation. Though it was revealed over 1,400 years ago, the words in Arabic have never been changed, which sets it apart from other books of scripture. Muslims also believe in scriptures that preceded the Qur'an: the Torah and the Bible (see Qur'an 3:3). The second source of guidance is the sayings and life example of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), known as the Sunnah.*

## Latter-day Saints

*Latter-day Saints believe both the Holy Bible and the Book of Mormon (a record of a people in America from 600 BC to AD 400) to be the word of God. Additional scriptures include*

*the Doctrine and Covenants (revelations given to Joseph Smith and others) and the Pearl of Great Price (writings of Abraham, Moses, and Matthew, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith). The scriptures testify of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world and show people how to live so that they can return to God (see Holy Bible, John 5:39).*

## **Analysis**

As anyone knows who regularly reads the articles from MarketFaith Ministries, all theistic religions depend, to some extent, on revelation to know about God and to discern His will. This is definitely true for both Islam and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The two statements above clearly reflect that fact.

The paragraph explaining the Islamic view of its holy book, the *Qur'an*, is an accurate description of how Muslims regard its authority for their faith and lives. It does correctly say, however, that Muslims do respect to some degree both the Old and New Testaments of Jews and Christians.

That being said, the above sentence that reads "*Though it was revealed over 1,400 years ago, the words in Arabic have never been changed, which sets it apart from other books of scripture*" is highly debatable. Muslims believe the *Qur'an*, as it now exists, is exactly as it was dictated to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel in the early AD 600s (he died in AD 632). Objective non-Islamic historians, however, have uncovered good evidence that in the years after the death of Muhammad, a number of discordant *Qur'an* manuscripts were circulated, and some parts were actually removed. At a point in time late in the 7th century, a single version was standardized and all variant texts were destroyed or suppressed.

Islamic apologists try to argue that the *Qur'an* is absolutely accurate in all regards, including scientific and historical facts. In reality, the text of the *Qur'an* contains a number of scientific and historical problems.

The LDS statement about its view of scriptures says the church accepts both the Old and New Testaments as divinely inspired. That is true, but it does not mention that the only Bible used by Latter-day Saints is the King James Version (KJV). The LDS church probably wants its people to only use that version because it is the writing style the other LDS scriptures emulate (see below). Nonetheless, it ignores the fact that newer versions based on better ancient manuscripts than were available in the 17th century have rendered the KJV somewhat obsolete. That, however, is not nearly as big a problem for Christians as is the assertion by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that three other texts are equal or superior in authority to the Bible.

Those three volumes include, as described above, *The Book of Mormon* (a record of a people in America from 600 BC to AD 400), *The Doctrine and Covenants* (revelations given to Joseph Smith and others), and *The Pearl of Great Price* (writings of Abraham, Moses, and Matthew, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith). Space in this article does not allow a thorough evaluation of the contents of those books, or how they originated. In every case these extra-biblical revelations of Joseph Smith have serious historical and internal textual issues. (For more information on these books go here: <http://www.marketfaith.org/the-book-of-mormon-is-it-another-testament-of-jesus-christ/> and here <http://www.marketfaith.org/mormonism-versus-christianity-can-they-both-be-christian-part-1/> )

Our conclusion is that neither the *Qur'an* nor the extra-biblical scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are genuine revelations from God. They are all the fabrications of their human authors, Muhammad and Joseph Smith, Jr. In all cases they contradict the clearly revealed infallible Word of God found only in the Bible.

## **Point Seven: Prayer**

*Muslims and Latter-day Saints believe that human beings must communicate with God through daily prayer. Prayer is central to both faiths.*

### **Muslims**

*Muslims believe that prayer plays a vital role in maintaining faith. Muslims offer five daily prayers using words verbatim from the *Qur'an* and ritual actions while facing toward the House of God, called the Ka'bah, in*

*Mecca. In addition to ritual daily prayers, Muslims offer personal prayers. Through prayer, Muslims maintain their relationship with God, gain strength to avoid temptation, and seek forgiveness and guidance. Muslims gather together at a masjid (mosque) to join in communal prayer.*

### **Latter-day Saints**

*Latter-day Saints believe it is a commandment to pray and that a loving God desires all of His children to communicate with Him through prayer. Prayer helps people draw closer to God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, gain strength to overcome adversity and sorrow, and receive guidance in raising a family and serving others. Latter-day Saints are taught to pray individually, as families, and as husband and wife. Religious gatherings are opportunities to pray together as a congregation.*

### **Analysis**

Obviously, prayer is a key practice in just about any theistic religion – including Islam and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The statements above accurately report that fact. That being said, as Christians, we need to evaluate the efficacy of prayer in both Islam and the LDS.

The Islamic sentence correctly says, "*Muslims offer five daily prayers using words verbatim from the Qur'an and ritual actions while facing toward the House of God, called the Ka'bah, in Mecca.*" Those five daily prayers (*salat*) are done at specified times each day and are carefully scripted in Arabic for each Muslim to recite verbatim. The statement does, however, say, "*In addition to ritual daily prayers, Muslims offer personal prayers.*"

The LDS statement affirms its belief about prayer which, as written, would be in accord with a Christians perspective. However, we need to dissect the statement, "*Prayer helps people draw closer to God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.*" That sentence is reflective of the Mormon concepts that God (Heavenly Father) and His Son, Jesus Christ, are two separate individual gods (the Holy Ghost is a third god). In traditional Mormonism all prayers are directed to the Father, who was our literal father in the pre-existence.

We cannot judge if God hears the prayers of Muslims and Mormons. Nonetheless, from a Christian perspective, while we commend people who pray, we ask the crucial question, "Who are Muslims and LDS praying to, and what is Jesus' part in the process?" In both cases, Islam and the LDS, their concepts of who God is and who Jesus is (the eternal Second Person of the Trinity) are deficient from biblical teaching.

### **Point Eight: Helping Those in Need**

*Muslims and Latter-day Saints share the conviction that compassion through offerings and service to others is a vital component of true faith in God.*

#### **Muslims**

*The Qur'an teaches, "Righteous is he who ... giveth his wealth, for love of God, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask ... and who payeth the poor due" (Qur'an 2:177). Charity-generous service to others is taught to Muslims. Zakat is an obligatory donation of 2.5 percent of annual gross of income to people in need. Shi'as also give an additional 20 percent of wealth acquired from certain sources (khums) to support the work of their religion. Islamic organizations assist poor and displaced populations worldwide by providing economic, medical, and educational support, often in partnership with other religious organizations.*

#### **Latter-day Saints**

*Latter-day Saints are taught to "impart of [their] substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants" (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 4:26). Voluntary service and offerings satisfy this command. Latter-day Saints also donate 10 percent of their income (tithing) to support the work of the Church. The fulfillment of this divine mandate is reflected in the worldwide humanitarian efforts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to all people regardless of denomination, race, or creed.*

## **Analysis**

This section of the comparison statement is actually dealing with two different issues. One issue is the compassionate sharing of material goods to help those in need. Both faiths, as do many Historic Christian denominations and relief agencies, have programs designed to accomplish that aim. We commend those kinds of humanitarian efforts by Muslims and the LDS.

That being said, we do not know how Muslims collect those funds or in what ways they are used to *"assist poor and displaced populations worldwide by providing economic, medical, and educational support, often in partnership with other religious organizations."*

As for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the church maintains as a vast system of Bishops' storehouses throughout the USA and the world . These storehouses are where needy church members (and apparently only church members) can obtain food and other necessities free or at drastically discounted costs.

The paragraph talks about *"the worldwide humanitarian efforts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to all people regardless of denomination, race, or creed."* We do not know to what extent the LDS supports charitable causes with goods available to the public or to help relieve the worldwide problem of hunger. We do know, however, that the LDS church maintains a once secret reserve of tax-exempt funds and investments worth over 100 billion dollars that is apparently never used for any specific projects (read the story here: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2019/12/is-the-mormon-church-hoarding-billions-of-dollars/> ). We must ask: Why does the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints not release even a portion of that vast cache of financial resources to remedy some of the world's health and hunger needs?

The other issue of this point concerns how the two faiths receive and administer offerings from their adherents. The Islam statement remarks that faithful Muslims are expected to donate *"2.5 percent of annual gross of income to people in need (sakat)."* How those funds are accumulated and expended by Muslim organizations is unknown. Also, just how many Muslims actually give their *sakat* is impossible to determine.

The LDS statement states: *"Latter-day Saints also donate 10 percent of their income (tithing) to support the work of the Church."* It is well known that LDS faithful members are obligated to give this "tithing" to the church. In fact, each year every member's income is audited by local church officials to assess exactly how much they owe. If they fail to keep up they may be in danger of losing their "Temple Recommend" (an authorized pass required to enter a LDS temple). All the funds collected are sent to the LDS world headquarters where it is distributed for church building and outreach programs around the world. The problem is that the church never makes a public statement, even to its members, of how these tithing funds are actually spent.

In any case, the legalistic mandate to give 2.5 percent or 10 percent is not warranted in the New Testament. The New Testament standard is to be a good steward of one's material possessions and give generously to support God's ministries as one is able according to his or her conscience. No Christian should have to undergo an interrogation of their personal finances by any ecclesiastical agency.

## **Point Nine: Fasting**

*For Muslims and Latter-day Saints, fasting is a practice that promotes spiritual growth and temporal well-being and brings faithful members closer to God.*

### **Muslims**

*Muslims participate in a worldwide fast each year during Ramadan. From dawn until dusk for a lunar month, Muslims refrain from food, drink, tobacco, and other physical gratifications. A Muslim who is fasting gives regular offerings to the poor at the end of Ramadan and throughout the year. Fasting often develops feelings of reverence, devotion, spiritual strength, and empathy.*

### **Latter-day Saints**

*Latter-day Saints usually fast on the first Sabbath of each month. They fast by abstaining from food and drink for 24 hours or a period of two meals. They are encouraged to fast for a special purpose, such as seeking*

*God's blessing for a family member or receiving divine guidance. Fasting includes prayer, reflection, and offering money or other resources to help people who are poor, hungry, or in need of shelter.*

## **Analysis**

The above statements indicate that both Muslims and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are expected to participate in specially dedicated seasons of fasting, that is, refraining from eating or drinking. For Muslims during the month of *Ramadan*, they are forbidden to eat or drink during the daylight hours. The statement says "*Fasting often develops feelings of reverence, devotion, spiritual strength, and empathy.*"

Faithful LDS members are expected to "*fast on the first Sabbath of each month. They fast by abstaining from food and drink for 24 hours or a period of two meals.*" They are expected to donate to the church the approximate amount that they saved by not buying food for those meals. (Note: In LDS parlance "Sabbath" refers to Sunday of each week.)

From a biblical perspective, fasting from food or drink for a season can be a valuable spiritual exercise. It can enhance one's devotion to and dependency on Christ. But fasting should not be a legalistic requirement, nor can it substitute for studying and meditating on Scripture. The ideal is to fast while spending time alone with God. Jesus Himself said that when we fast we should not tell anyone we are doing so (Matt. 6:16-18).

This concludes Part Two in this four part series analyzing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' statement comparing Islam to their own faith. In the next installment we will examine points ten through thirteen: (10) Physical Health; (11) Chastity; (12) the Role of Women; and (13) Family.

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