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What Do Latter-day Saints and Muslims Have in Common? Part 3
A Christian Evaluation Of Muslims and Latter-day Saints: Beliefs, Values, and Lifestyles
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When we began this series, we remarked how two religions have garnered much interest over the past few decades. Both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (AKA: LDS or Mormons) and the world religion of Islam (whose followers are called Muslims) have made major inroads in their numbers of adherents in North America and the world at large.

We related how the LDS, which was founded by Joseph Smith, Jr. in 1830, has increased its worldwide membership to more than 17 million, with about 7 million in North America. Islam, which was started in AD 633 in Arabia by Muhammad, now has nearly two billion followers in dozens of countries, with about 4 million in North America.

Because of this growth, followers of the two faiths have naturally interacted. Consequently, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has written a short pamphlet for its members titled *Muslims and Latter-day Saints: Beliefs, Values, and Lifestyles*. The publication compares and contrasts the beliefs and practices of the two faiths.. (Read the pamphlet here: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/muslims-and-latter-day-saints?lang=eng>)

In this four part series we have been reviewing that pamphlet from a Historic Christian perspective. We are carefully analyzing its contents to determine what it says and, perhaps more significant, what it does not say.

In Part One we examined the first four points of the LDS pamphlet: (1) Mutual Respect ; (2) Profession of Faith in God;(3) The Posterity of Abraham; and (4) 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 Part Two, we looked at points five through nine: (5) Jesus Christ; (6) Scriptures; (7) Prayer; (8) Helping Those in Need; and (9) Fasting . (Read Part Two here: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2022/02/what-do-latter-day-saints-and-muslims-have-in-common-part-1-tal-davis-2/>)

In Part Three we analyzed points ten through thirteen of the pamphlet: (10) Physical Health; (11) Chastity; and (12) the Role of Women; and (13) Family. (Read Part Three here: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2022/03/what-do-latter-day-saints-and-muslims-have-in-common-part-3-tal-davis/>)

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

Let's now continue our review and analysis.

Point Fourteen: Holy Places

Muslims and Latter-day Saints visit holy places and participate in sacred rituals. Doing so helps them follow God's guidance and receive His mercy and blessings.

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Muslims

A culminating event for every Muslim who is physically, mentally, and financially able is making a pilgrimage to the House of God, or Ka'bah, in Mecca. This sacred journey is also known as the Hajj. The Hajj is a deeply spiritual and rewarding experience that promotes unity among Muslims throughout the world. Muslims participate in rituals that include testifying of God's Oneness, repenting, and asking for God's forgiveness. These rituals reinforce the need to submit to God's will by overcoming personal ego and removing the symbols of earthly social status, wealth, and pride.

Latter-day Saints

For Latter-day Saints, a highlight of earthly progression is to make covenants with God in His temple. Latter-day Saints believe the temple is a house of God and have built hundreds of temples throughout the world. In the temple, the clothing and rituals symbolize that all worthy women and men are equal before God. The ordinances and covenants teach Latter-day Saints to understand the purposes of God, to obey His commandments, to treat their fellow beings with compassion, and to prepare for life after death. In temples, family bonds can be made to last for eternity.

Analysis

This section of the pamphlet addresses the fact that both Islam and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have special "holy places," as this piece calls them, "where they participate in sacred rituals" so they can better "follow God's guidance and receive His mercy and blessings."

Muslims have several locations in the world they certainly regard as holy, including Jerusalem. But their most holy places are both located in

Saudi Arabia where Muhammad lived and taught. One of them is the city of Medina (then called Yathrib) where he went in AD 622 to escape persecution in his home town of Mecca. This escape is known in Islam as the Hegira (the flight) and is regarded by Muslims as the founding event of their religion, and the beginning year of their calendar. Muslims are encouraged to visit Medina sometime in their life if they can.

The other, and more important holy site for Islam, is the city of Mecca. It is the city to which Muhammad returned from exile in AD 630 to establish his rule. In Mecca is located Islam's most holy shrine, the Grand Mosque, where is kept the *Ka'bah* (or Kaaba, "the cube"). The *Ka'bah* is actually a large tent which houses "the Black Stone," a large meteorite that symbolizes Islamic unity. Every good Muslim, if at all possible, is required to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime. This pilgrimage, called the *Hajj*, is performed by millions of Muslims at a certain time each year. The pilgrims walk around the *Ka'bah* and visit specific sites nearby where Muhammad lived and worked. It is important to note that only Muslims, certified as such by the Saudi Arabian government, are ever allowed to visit Mecca. Non-Muslims are explicitly excluded.

On the other hand, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has (currently) 170 dedicated (with 95 more under construction or planned) "Temples" or "Houses of the Lord" around the world. The best known is located in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City, Utah, across from the church's world headquarters. Keep in mind, LDS temples are not places where LDS people go regularly for worship services. Those are conducted in local worship centers called Ward buildings.

LDS temples are for members to engage in esoteric rituals to prepare

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them for their life and exaltation. The rituals, performed by both men and women only in temples, include proxy baptisms for the dead, eternal or "Celestial" marriage ceremonies (or "sealings"), watching educational videos about the fall and redemption of mankind, and participating in sacred (i.e.: secret) ordinances called "endowments." The endowments are somewhat similar to the rituals of Freemasonry and are conducted only in special rooms in the temples.

These rituals are considered essential for church members to enjoy the full benefits of eternal life in the Celestial Kingdom (see Point Fifteen below). Note, just as was true of Muslims and the *Hajj*, only duly certified members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are allowed to enter the temples. Each year members are required to meet with local church officials who determine, based on their personal behavior and activeness in the church (including tithings), if they can get a certificate called a "Temple Recommend."

Point Fifteen: Life After Death

Muslims and Latter-day Saints believe that the human spirit continues on after death, existing in a state of happiness or misery until the time of resurrection. Both believe that all people will be resurrected and will receive their due reward at the Day of Judgment.

Muslims

Muslims believe that they will be resurrected after death to be held accountable for their actions. The Qur'an teaches, "On that Day, people will come forward ... to be shown their deeds: whoever has done an atom's weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom's worth of bad will see that" (99:6-8). God is merciful, though, and He forgives those who truly follow Him.

Latter-day Saints

Latter-day Saints believe that a physical resurrection is made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His Resurrection. The Book of Mormon teaches that all will be held accountable for their actions at resurrection: "The day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works" (Alma 11:41). God will then assign His children to one of three kingdoms of glory. Those who have loved God, served Him, kept His commandments, and truly repented of all their sins will receive the most glorious of these kingdoms.

Analysis

This particular section of the pamphlet begins with the acknowledgment that both Muslims and Latter-day Saints believe in some form of life after death and in a divine judgment. That is true, but the way the section explains how those faiths understand those concepts does not go very deep.

The Muslim section states that they believe humanity will be resurrected after death to be held accountable for their actions. The clear implication of the paragraph is that people will face judgment based on how good or bad they were in earthly life. Actually, salvation in Islam requires that one be a faithful Muslim and abide by what the religion calls its "Five Pillars." Those Pillars, or principles, include the following:

1. Professing one's faith by reciting the Muslim statement of faith called the *Shahada* (see Point Two).
2. Five daily prayers called *Salat* (see Point Seven).
3. Almsgiving, called *Zakat* (see Point Eight).
4. The Fast, called *Sawm* (see Point Ten).
5. The pilgrimage to Mecca called the *Hajj* (see Point Fourteen).

In truth, even the most pious Muslims can never be sure of their salvation. It is only if "Allah wills." They must work as hard as possible to make themselves acceptable, but they have no real assurance. That being said, some Muslims believe that if one dies in a Jihad (holy war) he will go immediately to Paradise. Paradise (*Jannah*) is the heavenly place where Muslims go if they are judged righteous. Muslims believe that men who go there will be surrounded by seventy virgins and live in a sensual state of ecstasy. It is less clear what the state of women is like.

Those people who are not worthy of Paradise will be damned and sent to everlasting punishment in a burning hell called *Jahannam*.

The LDS statement, on the other hand, asserts "*Latter-day Saints believe that a physical resurrection is made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His Resurrection.*" As we mentioned before, in historic Mormonism, Jesus' death and resurrection restored immortality to all humanity, and that is all it provided. That is to say, whether or not one is a Christian, a Latter-day Saint, or anything else, he or she will be resurrected from the dead at the end of time. However, in Mormonism, one's ultimate eternal destiny is dependent on his or her personal behavior and whether or not he or she is an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As the point above says, at the final judgment, "*God will then assign His children to one of three kingdoms of glory.*"

Thus, the situation of life after death in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a bit complex. According to LDS doctrine, glory, or heaven, consists of three kingdoms or levels.

First is the highest level called the Celestial Kingdom. It is only for faithful Latter-day Saints. Latter-day Saints who have kept all the church's requirements and done their temple work (eternal marriage, endowments, and baptisms for the dead), and lived a near-perfect moral life may become "exalted" as gods. Those who do not live up adequately to the requirements may only become angels. These are some of the blessings given to exalted people:

1. They will live eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
2. They will become gods.
3. They will have their righteous family members with them and will be able to have spirit children also. These spirit children will have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father. They will be an eternal family.
4. They will receive a fullness of joy.
5. They will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge.

The second level of glory is the Terrestrial Kingdom which is for righteous non-Latter-day Saints. Good people of all religions who have lived decent lives will enjoy eternity in this wonderful kingdom where they will have fellowship with Jesus (but not Heavenly Father).

The third level, called the Telestial Kingdom, is reserved for wicked and ungodly people. It is, however, not hell. It is actually a nice place where they will have fellowship with the Holy Ghost (but not Heavenly Father or Jesus).

The LDS teaches that only a few people, along with the devil and his rebellious angels (one-third of Heavenly Father's children who rebelled against him in the pre-existence), will go to "Perdition" or eternal hell.

Note: The LDS teaches that people who are not Mormons may have another chance to join the church after they die if a living LDS member is baptized and does other temple work on their behalf.

Of course, Christians believe that, at the Final Judgment, those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior will inherit the fullness of eternal life in heaven with God. It is based entirely on the grace of God and our faith in Christ. No amount of good works can adequately atone for our sin, only Jesus' death and resurrection

makes us righteous. Those who have rejected Christ will suffer eternal separation from God's presence in hell. There is no indication in Scripture that salvation can be acquired after death.

Point Sixteen: Love for God and Humanity

Muslims and Latter-day Saints believe that by loving God and all humankind, peace and goodness will ultimately prevail. They devote their lives to living and teaching these principles.

Muslims

The Qur'an teaches Muslims, "Whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity" (5:32) and "Indeed, God is with those who are of service to others" (29:69).

Latter-day Saints

The Book of Mormon teaches Latter-day Saints, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Analysis

This brief point asserts that both Muslims and Latter-day Saints value human life and service to ease human suffering and encourage peace. The Muslim section only quotes a couple of verses from the *Qur'an*. It is important to note that Islam's record for bringing "peace and goodness" is not good. Since its founding in AD 620, that faith has extended its influence and increased its numbers of adherents almost always by the sword. Even in this century we have seen how radical Muslims continue this belligerent tradition.

The Latter-day Saints section also only quotes a verse in the *Book of Mormon* to emphasize the church's belief in serving God and mankind. Granted, the LDS has done some humanitarian work over the years. But as we stated before, we wonder why the church has hoarded over 100 billion dollars that could be used to improve the lives of millions worldwide.

Point Seventeen: Religious Diversity

Muslims and Latter-day Saints share many common beliefs and values and have similar lifestyles. The teachings of both faiths encourage believers to:

- *Acknowledge the goodness that can be found in other religions,*
- *Treat followers of other religions with tolerance and dignity, and*
- *Recognize that religious diversity provides an opportunity to cooperate in improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities.*

There are significant theological differences between the two religions, especially regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ and the need for living prophets. However, Muslims and Latter-day Saints continue to create and enjoy productive relationships by acknowledging the spiritual truth that each religion possesses and by fostering understanding and respect for each other.

This final section, Point Seventeen, is sort of a summary of the purpose for the publication of this pamphlet. It acknowledges that Muslims and Latter-day Saints have some common beliefs and want to improve their relationships. However, we question the assertion that both faiths "*Recognize that religious diversity provides an opportunity to cooperate in improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities.*" The histories of both Islam and the LDS do not substantiate that claim. As we pointed out previously, whenever or wherever Muslims dominate a society they suppress or eliminate all other faith groups, sometimes with ruthless ferocity. The LDS also has historically stated that it is the only true church on earth and that even other Christian groups are part of the "Great Apostasy." That being said, the LDS has endeavored in recent decades to improve its relationships with Christian denominations.

Conclusion

In this four part series we have reviewed a pamphlet published online by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints titled *Muslims and Latter-day Saints: Beliefs, Values, and Lifestyles*. (Read the complete text here: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/muslims-and-latter-day-saints?lang=eng>). The

piece, done by the LDS for its members, in cooperation with several Muslim organizations, attempts to compare and contrast the beliefs, practices, and goals, of those two religious movements. Our goal has been to analyze the seventeen statements in the pamphlet from an evangelical Historic Christian perspective. Please read the entire series and we welcome your comments.

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