

The Restoration (Part One)

By Marvin W. Cowan

The Mormon Church claims to be a restoration of “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (*Doctrine & Covenants* 1:30). It also claims that there was a “decline and final extinction of the primitive church among men” (*The Great Apostasy*, Preface) and therefore, all other churches are a part of “apostate Christendom” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 131). Notice how LDS Apostle, James Talmage explains the concept of the restoration:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims the restoration of the Gospel, and the re-establishment of the Church as of old, in this, the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. Such restoration and re-establishment, with the modern bestowal of the Holy Priesthood, would be unnecessary and indeed impossible had the Church of Christ continued among men with unbroken succession of Priesthood and power, since the “meridian of time.” The restored Church affirms that a general apostasy developed during and after the apostolic period, and that the primitive Church lost its power, authority, and graces as a divine institution, and degenerated into an earthly organization only. The significance and importance of the great apostasy, as a condition precedent to the re-establishment of the Church in modern times, is obvious. If the alleged apostasy of the primitive Church was not a reality, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not the divine institution its name proclaims. (*The Great Apostasy*, Preface)

Talmage makes two very important points in the above quotation: 1. It would be unnecessary and even impossible to restore the true Church and Gospel if they still existed on earth because you can't “restore” something unless it is marred or destroyed. (To restore something is to put it back in its original condition as nearly as possible). 2. The second point Talmage makes is that if there was no universal apostasy or extinction of the original Church and Gospel, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can't be a “restoration” of Christ's true Church and Gospel and therefore, its claims would be false.

In spite of Mormonism's claim that there was a universal apostasy, their own scriptures contradict that teaching. Section 7 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* is supposed to be a translated version of a revelation recorded by the Apostle John and later revealed to Joseph Smith. Verses 1-3 say:

And the Lord said unto me: John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you shall ask what you will, it shall be granted unto you. And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. And the Lord said unto me: verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.

Verse 6 goes on to say that John “shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth.” This text is the reason why Mormons claim that the Apostle John has been on the earth preaching the gospel and bringing souls to Jesus ever since he became a disciple of Christ in the first century. But, how could there have been a “universal apostasy” of the Church and Gospel if the Apostle John was actually doing what this LDS scripture said he would do? But that is only part of the problem.

The *Book of Mormon* also claims that after Jesus was resurrected in Judea, he appeared in America and chose twelve “Nephite” disciples to function like the twelve did in

Palestine. The heading over 3rd Nephi, chapter 28 says: "Nine of the Twelve desire and are promised an inheritance in Christ's kingdom when they die—The three Nephites desire and are given power over death so as to remain on the earth until Jesus comes again—They are translated and see things not lawful to utter, and they are now ministering among men." In 3rd Nephi 28:6 Jesus told the three Nephite disciples that He knew that they wanted the same thing that the Apostle John wanted, so in verse 7 He said to them: "ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven." Then verse 18 says those three "did go forth upon the face of the land, and did minister unto all the people, uniting as many to the church as would believe in their preaching; baptizing them, and as many as were baptized did receive the Holy Ghost." Thus, according to LDS scripture, four disciples of Jesus never died but have been on the earth preaching, baptizing, and adding people to the Church, and they will continue to do so until He comes again. That teaching is in conflict with the LDS teaching of a universal apostasy whereby the true Church and Gospel were no longer on earth. How could there be such an apostasy with four Apostles of Christ on earth along with multitudes of their converts? Either Mormonism's doctrine of a universal apostasy is wrong or their scripture is wrong—or both!

In the Bible, Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). He also said "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18), so He surely should have had the ability to build His Church! Even after He had ascended into heaven, Acts 2:47 records: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Thus, He was building His Church just like He said He would in Matthew 16:18. The Apostle Paul declared that God "gave Him (Christ) to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body—" (Eph. 1:22-23). And in Ephesians 5:23, he said, "Christ is the head of the Church." Again in Colossians 1:18 Paul said, Christ "is the head of the body, the church." Notice that Scripture describes the Church as a body with Christ as the Head. The Head and body are permanently joined together as one unit. Therefore, it is difficult to understand how the "body" or Church could become universally apostate unless the Head also became apostate—which is unthinkable!

We will continue to discuss the LDS claim of being the restored Church in the next article. For further information on this subject you may wish to order my tape entitled *The Joseph Smith Story Examined*.