

August 1, 2007

H.I.S. Ministries August Newsletter, covering July 2007

We are back from our camping trip that was very relaxing and refreshing in every way. We spent 2 weeks in the back-country of Idaho – one week by Deadwood Reservoir, North from Sawtooth Mountains, and an other week by Beaver Creek, about 45 miles from Stanley, Idaho. We used to go there every year, but it has been years since our last trip. To Dennis there is nothing like Idaho, since Idaho is his home-state, and I love it too. Weather was great, around 90+ degrees during the days and in 40's during the nights, which made us sleep well. We only had one thunderstorm, and that happened during the night, so all our days were sunny and just beautiful.

We had several books with us that we had waited to find time to read and learn from. We also listened to many Bible study-tapes and we were able to have good discussions on what we learned. There were no cell-towers close by, so we could not contact anyone, and no one could contact us. Our time was for the Lord, and for each other. We thank the Lord Jesus for this great time and rest and relaxation in God's beautiful nature. We thank you for praying for us while we were gone.

I am sure that most of you have heard a Mormon testimony. It more often than not, sounds a lot like what we as Christians believe, but it is not the same at all.

The first Sunday of every month in all the Mormon wards they have a "fast and testimony meeting". The ward members come to this meeting after fasting 24 hours and then they bear their testimonies to each other. When something is repeated over and over as fact, and once they have heard it enough times and repeated it enough times, they come to believe it without question. They repeat the same statements as if they really had inspected them in order to appear as they really "know".

Let me quote here what a Mormon testimony may be, "I know that the LDS church is the only true church on the face of the earth. I have received Jesus Christ as my Savior. I have faith in Christ and I believe in Him. I have been saved by God's grace through Christ's atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane and His death on the cross. I have been born again when I was baptized and I received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands . I know that I will be saved to the celestial kingdom if I keep all the laws and ordinances of the gospel and stay faithful to the church till the end." (There might be other things included to their testimony, as "I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet. I know that Gordon B. Hinckley – current prophet – is true prophet of God. I know that the Book of Mormon is true", etc.)

A Mormon bearing his/her testimony, is not trying to be deceptive – this is what they believe - but the problem is that his words do not mean the same as what Christians believe and what the Bible teaches.

What a Mormon is really saying by his testimony is that the truth about God is found only in the LDS church. He is saying that he believes what the church teaches about Jesus Christ (that He is not Eternal God, but a spirit brother of all, including Lucifer). He is saying that in the Garden of Gethsemane (not on the cross) Jesus atoned for Adam's transgression, which has a penalty of death to all, and thus because of Jesus' atonement, all will be resurrected, which Mormon Church teaches is "salvation by grace alone", but to gain true salvation, which they call exaltation (godhood) in the celestial kingdom, they have to work for it and stay faithful in the church to the end of their lives.

When a Mormon bears his testimony to you, he wants to confirm that the LDS church is the only true church, meaning that your church is false. Mormons bear their testimonies when they cannot explain the impossibilities in Mormonism and the complete lack of historical evidence for the Book of Mormon or

other Mormon scriptures. They say that they have received a testimony as an answer to their prayer if the church is true or if the Book of Mormon is true, etc. They say that they received a “burning in the bosom”, a warm feeling that came from the Holy Ghost as an assurance that Mormonism is true regardless of evidences against it. They also call it FAITH. It has been said that belief without proof is faith, but BELIEF IN SPITE OF PROOF is just FOLLY.

We, as Christians, witnessing to Mormons, have to appeal to the counsel from the Bible that says, “Believe not every spirit, but try (test) the spirits whether they are of God” – the reason being “because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1.) Simple test is to compare if teachings of the LDS “prophets” and their scriptures teach what the Word of God, the Bible teaches. A comparison shows that LDS prophets do not teach of the same God, not of the same Jesus and not of the true gospel and not of the salvation found in the Bible! Thus their testimony and belief is folly and invalid as far as God is concerned. Of course they have a right to believe what they want to believe, but the final analysis is that *it really does not matter what they or even we believe, but what matters is what the truth of God is.*

The problem we had when we were LDS was that we had accepted all LDS teachings without question, and the Bible only “as far as translated correctly”. What that really meant was that if LDS teachings and the Bible contradicted each other, then it was the Bible that was deemed wrong, “not translated correctly”, and LDS teachings took the front seat.

The most important thing for our leaning is to forget everything we were taught in Mormonism about the Bible, and take it for what it actually says! “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. 3:16.) It showed us where we have been wrong (*reproof*), and it *corrects* the falsehoods, and *instructs* how to receive God’s righteousness (through Jesus). (Romans 10:1-4).

We talk about this all the time because we must, for it determines whether we are helping Mormons or not. Just talking about “Jesus” will not clear up their confusion – it only makes them think that we agree with their doctrine, and that their “Jesus” is the same Jesus of the Bible too. If they pray to a false god and false Jesus, they may have experiences that can make them feel good, just like testimonies Mormons say they received from a spirit have made them feel “warm and fuzzy”. Spiritual deceptions are real! We know that from our personal experiences while we were Mormons. But the fact remains: a false Jesus cannot save anyone!

The questions to ask are: WHO IS JESUS? How do we become God’s children – how are we born again? John wrote that it is our new birth that makes us God’s children, and we are born again when we accept Jesus - not just “any Jesus”, but Jesus who is God. (John 1: 1, 12, 14.) A false Jesus or a false confession, even if sincerely given, will not bring salvation. Listen to what Jesus said: “Many will say to Me in that day (judgment day), Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me...” (Matt. 7:22-23.) Mormons do all their “wonderful works” in the “name of Jesus” – they speak and pray in His name, they boast that His name is even on their buildings! But what we read from Matthew’s gospel is that using the wonderful name of Jesus will not save unless we KNOW HIM, the REAL JESUS. Jesus emphasized that fact when He said: “If ye believe not that I AM He (God), ye shall die in your sins.” (John 8:24.) As Mormons, Dennis and I did not believe in Jesus who is eternal God, but instead we believed in a “Jesus” who was our spirit-brother and a brother of Lucifer. Regardless of our sincerity, we were lost souls, needing to know the true Jesus and be born of the Spirit of God, based on that knowledge of Him.

We read Dr. Robert Wilkin’s latest Newsletter, “Grace in Focus”, while we were camping, and it prompted us to include some of it (with permission) in our letter to you, for most people often connect the new birth with something we must do to be saved! There is nothing we can do, only believe in Him and eternal life He gives to those who come to Him by faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

He had titled his article, “The Power of A Personal Testimony”. (Volume 22, Number 3.)

He wrote: “At a recent conference during the question and answer session a man said that he was born again one year before he believed in heaven and life after death. He said that he believed that Jesus forgave his sins

in this life, so he is now convinced that he was born again at that time even though he believed that when you died, you ceased to exist.

I have heard lots of testimonies over my 34 years of ministry. While that one is quite unusual, I have heard many others that also are not accurate reflections of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is my contention that if your testimony does not accurately portray the message of John 3:16, then you should change your testimony. I realize that people get attached to their testimonies: 'But that's what happened to me!' Yet if your testimony is inconsistent with Scripture, then what happened to you at that time was not your new birth. It may have been a work of God in your life in which He gave you more insights into His Word. However, until your testimony clearly reflects the gospel Jesus preached, you haven't yet explained what you believed to be born again.

Confusing Conditions

Here are some of the confusing conditions of eternal salvation that I've heard and read over the last 34 years:

- *'I gave my life to Christ.'*
- *'I turned from my sins.'*
- *'I received Christ as my Lord and Savior.'*
- *'I yielded my life to the Lord Jesus Christ.'*
- *'I invited Jesus into my heart.'*
- *'I went under the water and came up a new man.'*
- *'I made Jesus Lord of my life.'*
- *'I committed my life to Christ.'*
- *'I put Jesus on the throne of my life.'*
- *'I got on my knees and cried out to God.'*
- *'I repented of my sins and turned to Christ.'*
- *'I walked the aisle and publicly confessed Christ.'*

I've recently heard several pastor friends who are DTS graduates say that they do not question the testimonies of people. If someone says they are born again, they accept the profession. If that claim is backed up by a confusing testimony, they accept that too. Evidently their view is that people can grow into clarity on the gospel, being saved by believing some form of works salvation, and then later coming to believe in everlasting life by faith alone in Christ alone.

While I too respect the convictions and experiences of other people, I do not accept those confessions as true unless they correspond with Scripture. People cannot be born again unless they clearly understand and believe that simply by believing in Jesus they have an irrevocable salvation (or life, or relationship with God). As long as someone believes that he must do good works to make it to heaven, he does not believe the message that Jesus preached to Nicodemus and the woman at the well in John 3 and 4. If I evangelize someone and they say that they should get into heaven because of their commitment to Christ, I explain John 3:16 or 5:24 or 6:47 to them. Since they do not believe the saving message right now, they are either an unbeliever, or a believer who has since become confused and has forgotten the saving message.

Therefore, if I speak with a church person and they give me a false condition of eternal life in their testimony, I evangelize them. I do not assume they are born again simply because they attend church regularly or had a life-changing experience many years ago...

If we uncritically accept testimonies that report a flawed condition or a flawed consequence as factual without submitting them to the lens of Scripture, then whatever people say is placed on par with Scripture. If someone says he was born again before he believed in life after death, then belief in life after death is not required. Who knows all the bizarre doctrines that will result if our doctrine of salvation comes from the experiences of people and not from Scripture? A bad testimony powerfully conveys false doctrine... No one is born again by committing his life to Christ. No one regenerated until he believes in Jesus for everlasting life... In this postmodern age, people love personal stories. Testimonies are a way to convey truth to people. But a testimony is only as good as what it testifies to. Inaccurate testimony is bad in a court of law and it's bad in Christianity as well. If your testimony does not match up with Scripture, then you need to change your testimony. It's that simple...your testimony needs to accurately reflect how you came to believe in Jesus for eternal life.

Experience is not the judge of Scripture. The opposite is true. The Bible judges our experience. The Lord

promised, 'He who believes in Me has everlasting life.' (John 6:47.) “ (Emphasis added.)

To read more of Dr. Robert Wilkin's teachings, go to www.faithalone.org

Jesus said (John 5:24), *'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth in Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.'* He also said (John 7:37-39), concerning the Holy Spirit, *"If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. But this He spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."* Notice that our faith object is a Trinity - God the Father, who sent His Son Jesus to give us everlasting life, and He had said that after He goes back to heaven, He will send the Holy Spirit as our Comforter and teacher. Conditions for a new birth are not easy to explain to a Mormon who has been taught of a father-god, a mere former mortal man, who is not God of the Bible, and of "another Jesus", but yet every time one is witnessing and explaining how to be born again, the first issue is to bring them to an understanding WHO GOD IS and WHO JESUS is. (Isa. 43:10.) (If father-god is a false god, then his son is also false.) They must know that Jesus is God, Immanuel, not a spirit brother of men and angels from a pre-existence! The Jesus taught of in the Bible is God, from everlasting to everlasting. He did not become a god, but He, God, became a man so that He could pay the penalty of our sins and *give us everlasting life!* (John 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:5-7.) Letting a Mormon believe in his concept of Jesus, and works salvation, will not result in a new birth, but only gives them false hope and false security. Let's tell them how it is. We never have to apologize for telling the truth. The truth of God will lead them to life-everlasting that God gives as His gift to those who, in faith alone, come to Him. We cannot save anyone, or force them to think and reason, but we can lead them to God's truth by presenting His uncompromised truth found in His Word, the Bible.

We had hundreds of emails waiting when we got home. In my box there were 618 letters and Dennis' box had 140. Some of them do not need answers, but it takes time to go through all of them to determine that.

From our mailbox:

A person who said that he is not LDS, wrote:

"Were you offended in some way and thought that you had to make yourselves feel better by belittling the fastest growing church this world will ever see. I am not a member but I think that people should have a backbone."

My reply:

If Mormonism was true and from the real God, no one could offend me enough for me to leave it. No one offended us. We were as happy as Mormons can be, UNTIL we discovered that it was not biblical but just a clever counterfeit. After many years of studies we had to leave it for Jesus of the Bible, who, we learned, is not our spirit-brother nor a spirit-brother of Satan, but God who created us, as well as all angels (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16).

I think it takes backbone to stand for truth, not the other way around, don't you? Our experience has been that those lacking backbone will stay in it even after finding out that it is not true.

Just because a religion is growing, even fast, does not make it correct. Actually lies tend to spread faster than truth. However, Mormonism is not the fastest growing religion in the world – Islam is. There are about 13 million Mormons in the world which is just a "drop in the ocean" compared to the 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. Islam's growth in USA during the last 3-4 years is amazing, considering that all of the terrorists (so far) have been Muslims both in USA and overseas. In a few months after 9/11 it was reported that there were thousands of converts to Islam in America alone! In the last couple of years Islam has grown even in Utah (Salt Lake City) so much that a couple of months ago they opened a third Mosque here.

The largest Western states Muslim Mosque, built only about 2 years ago, is in West Valley City, Utah, just a few miles from LDS temples. Mormonism's growth in USA is very minimal – it is mainly growing in Mexico and South America, where, due to the influence of the Roman Catholic church, most people do not know the Bible well enough to see problems in Mormon doctrine. Instead of Mormonism growing in Europe, many of the LDS missions have been closed there (namely in France and Germany) for lack of interest. It has also been reported that hundreds and hundreds of Mormons in America are leaving the church and asking that their names be removed from the records of the church. Most of the reported LDS growth in USA is credited to the large number of children born to Mormon families. Maybe you need to check into the facts rather than listen to the LDS PR propaganda.

A former LDS wrote:

"I just wanted to thank you for the work you do. I praise God Almighty for leading you out of darkness into His light. I was at one time Mormon too – but not very long. Two years from the day I converted into the church I ran away from the false teachings, and the rest of the devil's tools he was/is using within the LDS church. Yet in those two years I saw things that made it very easy for me to see it for what it was...Again I praise God that He is delivering people that have even been born into this cult. God bless you and I pray that you keep pressing on and in.

Yours in Christ Jesus, D. G.

[Thank you, D.G.]

A confused Mormon wrote:

"I have started to study other religions to find out one that is most accurate. Can you help me? S.S".

My reply:

You do not need to study "religions", but you need to seek God and His truth. All religions are, at best, men's effort to please God, but God is not interested in our "religions" or our religious acts. He wants us to have a personal relationship with Him by us seeking Him through His love-letter He has given to us in His Word, the Bible. It is a proven record of God's dealings with mankind – it is historically and prophetically accurate, and we can learn how much He loved the world, all of us for He gave His Son so that all who believe in Him will have everlasting life. (John 3:16.)

When we discovered that we had been deceived, we took a friend's advice and started to study the Bible - without pre-conceived ideas we had had about it– beginning with the gospel of John. It opened the whole new world to us and led us to Jesus and eternal life in and through Him.

Please feel free to ask questions, perhaps we can help.

In the Love of Jesus,

Rauni Higley – website: www.hismin.com

A Mormon asked:

"We have lately heard a lot more than in the past about 'salvation by grace alone'. I had thought that only Christians believe in that, but not long ago one of BYU's religion professors said on TV that he believes in 'salvation by grace alone', but I find it hard to find out what exactly he meant by it. I recall that in our Gospel Doctrine class we were taught that 'salvation by grace alone' means resurrection for all, not just for Mormons and Christians, but going to the celestial kingdom and exaltation we must stay faithful in our church, and be married in a temple. Since you were active Mormons and are now Christians, maybe you can help me to see both sides of this teaching.

I have also heard that Christians believe that salvation by grace alone means that they do not do works for it at all, and that once they are saved, they are always saved, even if they make mistakes and fall into sin. Thank you."

My reply:

In Ephesians 2:8-9 God's true salvation plan is given. It teaches that we are saved by grace through faith. This is not a concept of resurrection, for if that were true, then only those who have faith in God and in Jesus' redemption work, would be resurrected. Verse 8 clearly says, 'For by grace are ye saved through faith...' This cannot be a teaching of resurrection for all, nor the Mormon concept of working one's way to God and celestial kingdom through obedience to the Mormon gospel, for the rest of verse 8 and verse 9 teaches, "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The Bible teaches that we cannot mix grace and works. "If (salvation is) by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it (salvation) be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Romans 11:6.) We must receive God's gift of eternal life through faith alone. If we add anything to that gift, we are not saved at all, regardless of how good life we live. On the other hand, if one is truly born again and has received the salvation-gift, and has become a participant of eternal life, he will be eternally secure in his position as a child of God. Once you have been born again, you cannot be un-born, any more than you can be physically unborn.

We do not work to gain or earn our salvation, nor do we do works to keep us saved. Christ Jesus did it all. He gives us "eternal life" – it would not be eternal life, if it could be lost. Eternal security of a believer is clearly taught in numerous passages of the Bible, as in John 10:27-29; Romans 8:35-39; Eph. 1:11-14; 1 John 5:11-13. Some refer to Hebr. 6:4-6 and 10:26 as teaching that one can lose his salvation. We must always take the Bible as a whole. Scriptures teach eternal security, so this has to be looked at in light of the rest of the Word of God.

It is important however, to examine our faith as 2 Cor. 13:5 instructs. We must ask: Is our faith genuine, or are we just pretending before people that we are saved?

Hebrews 6 and 10 both present "falling away" as a hypothetical question. "IF they fall away..." (Hebr. 6:6) and "IF we sin willfully" (10:26) – it does not say "when they fall away" or "when we sin willfully". What the writer to the Hebrews is saying is that if the crucifixion of Christ over 1900 years ago was not enough to keep one saved, and if salvation could be lost, then Christ would have to be crucified again for one to be saved again. The fact is that Christ purchased salvation at a price we could never pay, but if He then handed our salvation into our hands to keep, He indeed would be put to open shame for such a foolish act. This "falling away" is proved by the rest of the scriptures to be only a hypothetical question – something that could never happen. "Falling away" does not accompany genuinely received salvation, purchased by our God, Lord Jesus who, as the next chapter, Hebrews 7:25, assures that He is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them." - I hope this helps – if you have further questions, please write again.

For more answers to gospel questions, go to our website Newsletters.

www.hismin.com/newsletter.html

Sincerely, Rauni Higley

Dear friends, we thank you again for your partnership with us in this ministry. We could not do it without your prayers and help and counsel. Summer months are hard for ministries in general to meet their expenses, and that is the case for us too, but we are confident that the Lord will take care of it all, even if in the last minute. Depending on God and His provision without promises from people is the way to have an exiting life! ☺

Please pray: For Bruce (for a fast settlement from insurance companies for the injuries he received several years ago in a car accident, that made him permanently disabled). For Judy (wisdom in important decisions she must make soon). For Margaret who is still grieving for death of her husband and our dear friend, 3 months ago. For Mabel, our dear 92-year old faithful friend and witness for the Lord, who may be going to be with the Lord very soon, and for her husband Harold, who called us about Mabel's dire situation just last night.

We have several other dear friends who have health issues, needing prayer.

Please keep praying for Edward in Uganda, and his group of almost 30 former-LDS, who are having weekly Bible-studies together, and inviting more to come.

Please pray for Stephani for wisdom (she has received 5 DVDs and books we have sent to her as a help in her witnessing efforts). Please pray also for Landon, Karen and John.

There are many others (some anonymous) to whom we have given information, answered their questions, but who have job or a family-issues that keep them from putting the Lord Jesus of the Bible first in their lives. It is hard, but if we do not love the Lord more than even our family, we may loose all. (Matt. 10:37-39.)

Please pray also for Robert and Sandra Koivisto, who are right now in Finland on a mission-trip. Keep your eyes in Israel – and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. (Ps. 122:6.)

In the Love of Jesus,

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