



Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints / Mormons

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Summary of movement

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), popularly referred to as the Mormon Church, is a non-Trinitarian restorationist branch of Christianity. It was founded in New York State by Joseph Smith (1805–1844) after he had received a series of visions in the 1820s and claimed an angel had directed him to a buried book of golden plates inscribed with the Judeo-Christian history of an ancient American civilization. The English translation of these plates is known as *The Book of Mormon*, which, together with the Bible, is regarded as Divine Scripture. The Church is restorationist in that it sees itself as restoring the early Apostolic Church in a new form; and it is millenarian in that it anticipates the imminent, physical Second Coming of Jesus Christ. By returning to the early Church as described in the New Testament Gospels, Mormons seek to prepare for and create the Kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth.

The Church situates North America as the focus of its millennial expectations. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ will be centred in the state of Utah, where the Church now has its headquarters. However, the Church has spread to 182 countries worldwide ([LDS Church Temples](#), no date). As of the end of 2016, membership according to the Church's own figures was 15.9 million baptised members ([LDS 2017](#)). It is one of the fastest growing religions, thanks to active missionary efforts and a high birth rate among its members (Merrill, Sloan and Steele [2015](#)). Its growth is particularly strong in Latin America, where the greatest number of members now reside (Givens 2006, 34).

The sociologist Rodney Stark (2005) has projected that the LDS Church will be the next major world religion, reaching a size and influence similar to that of Catholicism or Islam. This claim has, however, been disputed by other scholars (Gooren 2009; Davies 2007), and the Church's rate of growth has dropped in recent years (Reiss [2016](#)).

There is a wider Latter-day Saints movement consisting of over 400 separate and distinct church organisations each claiming to be the true Church as created by Joseph Smith (Bringhurst and Hamer 2007). However, most of these Churches are relatively small and generally lack the influence of the main Church.

Mormonism illustrates a number of interesting facets of millenarianism, incorporating aspects of both premillennialism and postmillennialism. Over time, the emphasis has changed, especially for the mainstream LDS Church. There are now substantial differences in official Church policy concerning the Second Coming, the commitment by individual believers to millenarianism, and the activities of splinter groups. Whilst millenarianism has become routinized in the mainstream Church, expectations of an imminent, catastrophic apocalypse have been embraced by the more fundamentalist groups.



The Salt Lake Tabernacle, or Temple, of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah. Source: ©2009 Kenneth Hynek; Wikimedia Commons. Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic.

History/Origins

Mormonism emerged in a context of generalised millennialism among 19th century American Protestants (Stone 2011). The discovery and colonisation of North America had been read through a biblical lens by Puritans and their Protestant successors on the continent. A series of awakenings and revivals had spurred religious fervour during the early decades of the century, swelling the ranks of believers. There was an expectation that the millennium, the period of one thousand years when Jesus Christ would rule, had arrived or would soon arrive, potentially in the United States. These expectations were accompanied by earnest efforts to create the Kingdom of God on earth. Among explicitly millenarian sects that emerged during the century were the Shakers, the Oneida Perfectionists, the Campbellites, the Millerites and,

subsequently, the Seventh-day Adventists. It was from this milieu that Mormonism emerged.

Many of these sects sought to reform or restore the Protestant Church in America, which they perceived as corrupted. The Campbellites and Mormons were among the restorationist groups. They hoped to restore the Apostolic Church found in the New Testament. The two groups shared some early leaders (Sidney Rigdon and Parley Pratt both left the Campbellites to follow Joseph Smith). Both groups held that Christ's True Church was being restored in their time. But while the Campbellites believed that [prophecy](#) and revelation were completed with the New Testament, the Mormons believed that God (through Joseph Smith, who is regarded as a prophet) had opened up the canon with new revelations and scriptures because they were now in the latter-days - the last days before the Second Coming.

In Smith's First Vision, he claims to have seen two 'personages' whom he later identified as God and Jesus ([LDS](#)). He asked which Church he should join, and they told him that none of the existing Churches was the True Church of the Gospels. Instead, they told him to found a new Church. In subsequent visions, Smith saw the Angel Moroni, who revealed to him the texts of the scriptures that would become *The Book of Mormon* - a Third Testament that supplemented the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, as well as other holy books of the LDS Church.

The Story of the First Vision.

In 1830, Smith founded the 'Church of Christ' in Palmyra, New York, but later changed the name to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The doctrinal innovations resulting from Smith's [prophecies](#) alienated the Mormons from other Christians from the outset. The Mormons were viewed as blasphemers, and later, due to their practice of polygamy, immoral. The hostility convinced Smith that survival of the Church required both a political and economic independence from the United States, and early Mormon leaders tried to establish a city state for the faithful first in Kirtland, Ohio, then Independence, Missouri, followed by Nauvoo, Illinois. At each location, as they faced persecution, they responded with westward migration.

In Nauvoo, Smith was mayor, and his exertion of political power in the town led to resentment among non-members of the Church. After Smith banned a newspaper that had opposed the Church as a public nuisance, a riot broke out. Smith was acquitted of inciting a riot in Nauvoo but then gave himself up on the same charges in Carthage, Illinois. He was attacked by a mob while being held in jail and shot, falling from a window as he died. In the absence of a clear line of succession, the death of Smith resulted in a splintering of the Church. The largest faction followed Brigham Young, the then president of the Church's governing body, the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Young led them west to the Great Salt Valley, the territory that later became the state of Utah, and this group became the foundation of the mainstream Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that continues to this day.

Beliefs

Mormons consider themselves Christian. They believe in God, whose son, Jesus Christ, is the Messiah. They believe that Jesus was born on earth to the Virgin Mary, died on the cross to absolve Adam's sin, and was

resurrected. They see themselves as restoring the 'true' Church of the Bible which makes them different in a number of ways from other expressions of Christianity.

Restoring the Church required 'the gathering of Israel', bringing together the faithful in one place and building Zion, the kingdom of Jesus Christ, on Earth. For Joseph Smith, Zion was a physical place, not a metaphor as it was for many other Christians. The aim of his Church was to physically build the 'New Jerusalem', which he had announced would be near Independence, Missouri. However, after his death Zion was identified with the area that became Utah. Later, Zion became a metaphysical concept, the central 'stake' in the ever-growing tent of the Kingdom. LDS local jurisdictions are still called 'stakes' following on from this concept. Mormons aim to spread the Kingdom as widely as possible, building it through missionary activity worldwide. It is a political and economic kingdom of God. The independence of the Saints is seen as necessary for their survival, given their history of persecution. It also serves to separate the faithful in Zion from the corrupting influence of Babylon, identified as the secular world beyond the LDS Church.

Core Beliefs of the Latter-day Saints

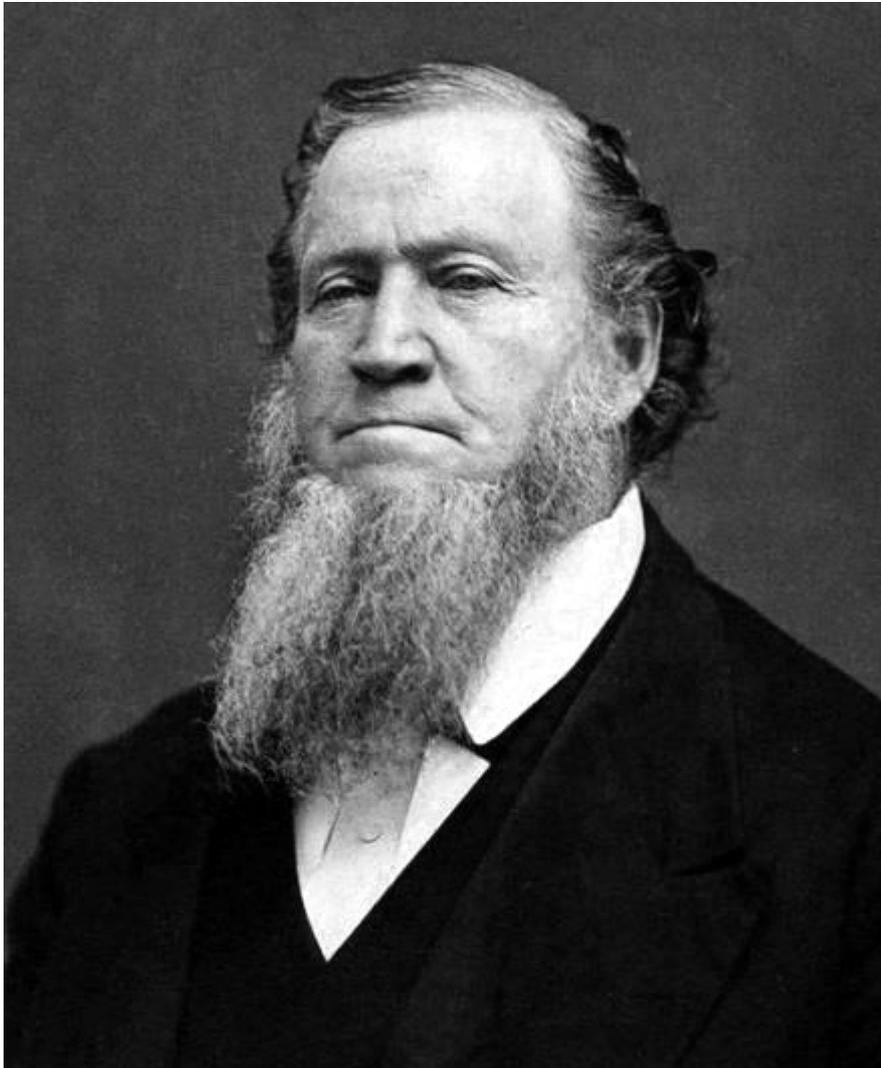
A significant difference between Mormons and many other Christians is their non-Trinitarian belief. LDS doctrine holds that God, often addressed as 'Heavenly Father', Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three separate divine beings, not aspects of the same divine being. God and Jesus are exalted men, meaning that they were once human beings with physical bodies who later moved into the spirit world and the highest level of exaltation. This makes Mormons heretics, or not real Christians, in the eyes of most other Christian denominations.

The movement of God and Jesus between their mortal existence and the spirit world is available to all humans. Mormons believe in three worlds, or realms of existence: premortal, mortal, and the spirit world. Souls move from the premortal, through mortal existence, into the spirit world. Exaltation in eternity is the highest achievement that souls can attain, and this is the Mormon conception of salvation. There are three Kingdoms of Glory in the spirit world: Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestial. Exaltation, or eternal life, is salvation in the Celestial Kingdom. This is a doctrine of human theosis; humans can become as God, if they choose to fulfil God's plan.

Despite its name, the spirit world is believed to have a physical existence. Families live together forever there, so long as their relationships were sealed in the Temple. Plural marriage in the early Church was seen as a way for men to help more women get into the highest kingdom. Women are encouraged to have many babies because this means more spirits are drawn from premortal existence into mortal existence, giving them the chance for exaltation. For Mormons, the family is sacrosanct; they cannot reach the Celestial Kingdom if they remain unmarried.

As well as the Old and New Testament of the Bible, Mormons hold that *The Book of Mormon* is a Third Testament. Their other scriptures include *Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price*, both of which contain the [prophecies](#) and revelations of Joseph Smith. *The Book of Mormon* is the history of God's dealings with the ancient peoples in North America. It identified two groups, the Lamanites and the Nephites, as descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. After a long conflict, only a few Lamanites survived. It

recounts how Jesus came to North America after his resurrection and is, thus, a gospel of Jesus Christ for the latter-days. These revelations formed the basis of Joseph Smith's authority to effect the 'end time' restoration of God's True Church. Smith's authority was then passed down through the prophets that succeeded him, the first of whom was Brigham Young. After Young, it was deemed that the leader of the Quorum of 12 Apostles would automatically become the next prophet, thereby avoiding any future succession crises.



Brigham Young. Source: Utah State Archives; Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.

Millennial Beliefs

A central part of Joseph Smith's First Vision was that the Second Coming of Jesus was imminent. This created the urgent need for the restoration of the Church. It is part of the doctrine of the LDS Church that the Second Coming will usher in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ of literally one thousand years, a millennium ([LDS](#), no date). From the founding of the Church, Mormons have been waiting for the literal return of the person of Jesus Christ, which would begin the millennium. Believing that they are living in the 'latter days'

of human history, they see themselves as the 'Latter-day Saints', who will be saved in the Kingdom of Jesus on earth. Being a Latter-day Saint is crucial to Mormon identity (Introvigne 1997, 242), a belief that has been supported by the policy of the 'gathering of Israel' – the migration of converts to Utah.

A contemporaneous source quoted Joseph Smith on pronouncing about Mormon millennial beliefs: "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel, and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes. That Zion will be built upon this continent. That Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisaical glory" (quoted in Rupp 1844, 410). As well as pointing to verses of the New Testament, Mormons find confirmation of the Second Coming in several sections of *The Book of Mormon*.

LDS Scriptural References to the Signs of the Second Coming:

- 3 Nephi 24:1 "the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple".
- 24:2 "But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?"
- 25:1 "For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch".
- 25:5 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the [prophet](#) before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord".
- 27:16 "And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world".
- 29:2 "Ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming unto the children of Israel".
- Mormon 8: 26–32 [prophesises](#) signs of the Second Coming, including the denial of the power of God by unbelievers, the churches defiled, fires, tempests, vapours of smoke in foreign lands, wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes 'in divers places', pollution of the earth, murders, robbing, lying, deceiving, whoredom, and 'all manner of abominations'.

The Second Coming is also described in *Doctrine and Covenants* 29:11: "For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand." There follow further signs of the end times, including stars falling from heaven, weeping and wailing, the sun darkened, the moon turned to blood, hailstorms destroying the crops, and the great and abominable church cast down.

Gospel Principles 43 includes the signs of the end times. It states that when Jesus Christ rules on earth it will be a time of peace and joy, but before that happens there will be a time of great trial and calamities, the Great Tribulation. Signs will tell the faithful when this is near so that they can be prepared. They must be obedient and faithful so that they know the signs and can be ready. Signs include the building of the New Jerusalem; the return of the Old Testament [prophet](#) Elijah; the Lamanites becoming a great people;

the coming forth of *The Book of Mormon*; war, wickedness and turmoil; and the restoration of the Gospel and knowledge of it spread to all the people on the earth. The link at [Gospel Principles 43](#) offers a study exercise to look for the ways that these signs have already been fulfilled, and emphasises that preparation is a way to avoid fear.

Preparing for the Second Coming, from the LDS General Conference 2015.

These scriptural references encode the Second Coming in official LDS Church doctrine and teaching. There are, however, other [prophecies](#) that refer to the Second Coming which do not have official Church backing. One of the most famous of these is the White Horse Prophecy of 1843, which is attributed to Joseph Smith. In this prophecy, the 'White Horse' is a symbol of the LDS Church, based on Revelation 6:8. The prophecy is recorded in the form of recollections by others who claimed that they had heard Smith say it, rather than directly from Smith himself. The prophecy is that the White Horse will come in and save the United States when the Constitution "will hang like a thread as fine as a silk fiber" (Cobabe [2011](#)). This is not accepted by the current LDS Church as doctrine; however, there is evidence that early leaders such as Brigham Young quoted it. It has inspired the Fundamentalist Latter-day Saints (FLDS) and others in linking Mormon control of the US federal government to millenarianism. According to such interpretations, the Second Coming will take place after LDS political domination has saved the American nation from disaster. The Church will establish a theocracy that will preface the rule of Jesus on earth. In other words, believers in the White Horse prophecy see themselves as the saviours of America.

The death of Smith diminished the expectation of an imminent Second Coming. He had [prophesied](#) that he would not reach the age of 85 without seeing God's face. This could be interpreted in several ways, one being that Smith had foretold that the Second Coming would occur in 1890, the year in which he would be 85. However, this was contingent on his being alive in that year, but since he had died before then, the Second Coming was no longer expected to take place in 1890. However, Mormons continued to attribute great symbolic significance to this particular year.

It has been suggested that LDS millenarian speculations influenced the Native American Ghost Dance of 1890, which emerged in an area of Nevada where Paiutes and Mormons lived in close proximity. The first generation of Mormons expected the Second Coming in their lifetime. The American Civil War (1861-1865) was interpreted as God's judgement on America (Abanes 2002, 266-267), with Brigham Young declaring that it was God's punishment for the killing of Smith and the continuing persecution of the LDS Church. After the war ended, the Church focused on building Zion themselves in the Great Salt Valley.

The post-1890 Mormon Church embraced less revelation and millenarian rhetoric, moving towards assimilation with mainstream America and the establishment of the state of Utah by, for example, banning the controversial practice of polygamy. Introvigne (1997, 233) calls this the Church's "Talmudic phase". It was a period of routinisation of millenarianism in which social gospel work became a way of improving life on earth and creating the Kingdom of God through good works, social outreach, and activism. Christ's Kingdom was to appear through the earthly efforts of the faithful, not through dramatic supernatural intervention. The Church also ended the policy of "the gathering", with new converts no longer moving to Utah but working instead on creating Zion in their home regions. This shift can be observed among the British converts, who had moved *en masse* to the western US during the 19th century, but who, from the

20th century onwards, remained in the UK. Indeed, all the temples in Britain were built after the Second World War.

Scholars differentiate between premillennialism and postmillennialism (Stone 2011, 493; Underwood 1985, 217). Both beliefs involve a thousand-year period, or millennium, but in premillennialism the Second Coming precedes and inaugurates the millennium after a period of tribulation, whereas in postmillennialism the Second Coming comes after the millennium, which has been built by the faithful on earth. Each is associated with certain characteristics: premillennialism with quietism, catastrophism, and pessimism; postmillennialism with activism, progressivism and optimism. Mormonism has both postmillennialist and premillennialist aspects (Introvigne 1997, 231). The clearest postmillennialist trait is the focus on building Zion on earth gradually through faith, obedience, and good works; but premillennialism is present in the scriptural references to a Tribulation ended by the physical appearance of Jesus on earth. In some scholarly views, the early premillennialism of the Mormons was transformed into 'kingdom building *quasi*-postmillennialism' (Stone 2011, 499, emphasis in original). Premillennialism receded with the loss of Smith as the living [prophet](#) who had provided continuous revelation from God informing the faithful about how to carry out His will. After Smith's death, it was no longer necessary to wait for the Second Coming to learn how to build the kingdom. Such a shift has been seen as part of a wider shift to postmillennialism within American Protestantism in general (Stone 2011, 505). However, due to their 'hermeneutics and basic eschatology', Mormons are premillennialist according to the Mormon studies scholar Grant Underwood (1985, 219). In Underwood's view, although Mormons have some postmillennial aspects, this does not make them postmillennial. They are, he believes, premillennialists who are also evangelically active.



Temple Lot in Independence, Missouri. This site was dedicated by Joseph Smith in 1831 as the location of 'New Jerusalem', where the Saints would gather in the 'last days'. Several Churches belonging to different Latter-saints groups have been built around this location, including a temple by the Reorganized Latter-day Saints (right, with the spire), the Hendrickite Church of Christ (centre), and the RLDS Community of Christ Stone Church (left). Source: ©2010 EGDJ, Wikimedia Commons. Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported.

Klaus Hansen, an historian of the Mormon Church, relates Mormon millenarianism to a response to the privations and disruptions of Jacksonian-era America (1967). It was, he argues, a new social order for those alienated from the prevailing American social order. The Church became a route for upward mobility and social prestige for those who could not advance by themselves in secular society. Underwood (1985), however, argues against this position, claiming that millenarianism is not just for poor, dispossessed and marginal people; that one does not have to be disenfranchised to be millenarian. The rise of 19th century industrial capitalism was important in the history of religious movements, but it does not explain everything that happened. For Underwood, doctrinal issues were more important than socioeconomic ones when looking at early Mormon sources. The members were a devout people who were genuinely motivated by a desire to restore the Church (Underwood 1985, 225). According to this view, Mormon millenarianism was a protest movement that focused on doctrinal and devotional changes.

Although downplayed by the mainstream Church, millenarianism persists through folk beliefs among

Mormons concerning how the end of the world will occur (Introvigne 1997, 236). Stories involving the Three Nephites are popular. These are the three apostles called by Jesus during his visit to North America, as described in *The Book of Mormon*. They were to remain on earth to prepare humanity for the Second Coming. Other unofficial Mormon millenarian ideas are derived from sources including Protestant evangelical millenarianism, private patriarchal blessings (received after baptism by a patriarch of the ward to which the new convert belongs), Mormon literature, and Mormon studies scholarship. However, millenarian speculation is no longer a focus of official LDS Church policy, and there has been occasional disciplining of the millenarian fringe by the mainstream Church.

Practices

The practices of the LDS Church are aimed at preparing the faithful for the Second Coming and creating Zion on earth in the present. In 1844, a governing body called the Mormon Council of Fifty was established by Joseph Smith in anticipation of managing the millennial kingdom (Underwood 1985: 226). This played a significant role in his unsuccessful run for President of the United States. However, following this failure, the Council became mainly symbolic and it ceased to hold regular meetings.

Nowadays, members play their role in building Zion through their daily works and fidelity to the Gospel. This means being baptised by immersion into the LDS Church. Baptism is available for children once they reach the age of eight, but is also for adult converts. Furthermore, baptism of the dead is practised for those who lived without being aware of Smith's revelations and the restored Gospel. In this way, Mormons can work towards the whole world being aware of the restored Gospel, which is one of the signs of the Second Coming.

The Second Coming is also propelled through missionary work and evangelism. All young Mormons are strongly encouraged to undertake missionary work from the age of 18 for men and 19 for women. The normal period for this was reduced for young single men ('elders') from two years to eighteen months (the usual period for women) in 1982. Native Americans have been a particular focus of Mormon evangelism as they were identified as the descendants of the Lamanites, one of the signs of the end times being that the Lamanites would become a great people (Gospel Principles 43).

Young Mormons on a Mission, an ABC News report from 2012.

The practices of the LDS Church combine their secular lives with their sacred commitments. For example, all members are encouraged to volunteer in their local wards and stakes (administrative divisions of the Church). The LDS Church is run by a lay priesthood who do not receive remuneration; rather, they see it as a calling. Only the Great Authorities in Salt Lake City receive salaries from the Church, and even these are set at a flat rate for all positions regardless of seniority or responsibility. The aim is to create Zion on earth now through self-sufficiency, welfare provision, and education, thereby achieving the independence of Zion from Babylon through the work of the Saints.

Controversies

Some fundamentalist Mormons espouse far-right anti-government politics, especially in rural areas of Utah, Arizona, Idaho, and Nevada. Some remain part of the mainstream Mormon Church, but others are excommunicated for their lack of doctrinal orthodoxy. They mix the premillennialism of early Mormonism with anti-government survivalism and apocalypticism.

The mainstream LDS Church outlawed plural marriage (polygamy) in 1890, as a necessary step towards gaining statehood for Utah in 1896. Some families, which were to become known as the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS), refused to give up the practice, many fleeing to Short Creek (the name given to the twin cities of Hildale, Utah and Colorado City, Arizona). The FLDS, and a number of other splinter-groups that also maintained polygamy as both a doctrine and a practice were excommunicated by the mainstream Church in 1935. Such groups see themselves as the only True Church, and consider the mainstream Church to be in a state of apostasy for abandoning polygamy, which had been practised by Joseph Smith and all the early Mormon Church leaders. There are roughly 10,000 FLDS members across North America (CBC 2017), with communities of varying sizes across the United States (including Pringle, SD, and Eldorado, TX), Canada (including Bountiful, BC) and Mexico.



Temple of the FLDS in Eldorado, Texas. Public domain. Wikimedia Commons

Members of the FLDS continue to practise polygamy, and have been accused of child abuse and sexual assault for the marriage of underage girls to older male members of the Church. One of their doctrines is the 19th century Mormon teaching of blood atonement, long since abandoned by the mainstream Church, that some sins are so severe they can only be atoned for by the death of the sinner (Krakauer 2003). Individual members and the Church as an organisation have faced investigations and convictions for food stamp fraud, money laundering, and tax fraud, part of the practice of “bleeding the beast” which means defrauding the US federal government (Brower 2011).

The FLDS leader Warren Jeffs is seen by his followers as God’s spokesperson on earth. He has predicted that meteors would strike the earth, killing the unbelievers, after which the lost ten tribes of Israel would be reunited. The Yearning for Zion ranch was constructed in Eldorado, Texas, as a place for FLDS members to survive the imminent apocalypse. Many of the FLDS leaders are now in jail. Warren Jeffs has been imprisoned since 2006 for sexual abuse of two young girls taken as wives, for which he was given a life sentence (Hyde 2016). His brother Lyle Jeffs was apprehended in June 2017 after fleeing house arrest prior to trial for food stamp fraud (AP 2017) and was sentenced to five years in prison in December 2017 (McCombs 2017a). A \$16 million settlement from the Church was made to a former member who had been forced to marry her cousin at the age of 14 (Carlisle 2017a). The political power that FLDS members used to wield in Hildale and Colorado City in the form of a local theocracy has recently been weakened. FLDS members of the local police force have been replaced; the first non-FLDS mayor has been elected, and several FLDS families were told they would be evicted from their homes (Carlisle 2017b, McCombs 2017b, Dark 2017, Walters 2017). The FLDS communal property trust, the United Effort Plan, has been taken over by the state of Utah. At the very end of December 2017, however, following negotiations, it has been reported that some families will be able to remain in their homes (Carlisle 2017c).



Warren Jeffs, from his FBI wanted poster. Source: FBI; Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.

Another fundamentalist Mormon splinter group is the Kingston clan based in Davis County, Utah. They are also known as the Order, the Latter-Day Church of Christ, and the Davis County Cooperative Society. The name ‘The Order’ was inspired by the United Order, a utopian society founded by Joseph Smith in 1831 that aimed at fostering Christian communalism for the economic support of Mormons. Like other fundamentalist Mormon groups, it was excommunicated by the mainstream LDS Church in 1935. The Church is polygamous and made up of the numerous descendants of its founder, Charles ‘Elden’ Kingston,

who had five wives and 17 children (Hales 2006). The Church has a [prophecy](#) of an End of the World war, which will be a race war with much bloodshed. The Kingstons will win, and will then rule the earth as God's elect for a millennium. In a version of Joseph Smith's White Horse Prophecy, black people will come close to killing off the White Horse, which will be saved by the Red Horse, identified as the Native Americans, and then the Kingston clan will rule. This Church has around 6,000 adherents and a billion dollars net worth of businesses, including a grocery store, pawn shops, waste disposal service, insurance company, biofuels plant, and a firearms factory. It was founded during the Great Depression in 1935. Members pool resources communally to build the Kingdom of God on earth. Inter-marriage of cousins and relatives is practised as a way of keeping the bloodline "pure"; the group has been accused of incest as well as polygamy and racism; and it has been designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center (Lemons [2017](#)).

There are some Mormon connections to the American militia movement. Militias are widespread in Mormon-dominated counties in the Western states of the US. Some identify the federal government with the Antichrist, whose forces must be fought as part of the end times. Cliven Bundy and his family are Mormons (Sepulvado [2016](#)) who initiated armed standoffs with federal agents in Nevada in 2014 and Oregon in 2016 that were condemned by the official LDS Church. The Bundys claimed to be inspired by and protected by God in these confrontations (Binder [2016](#)). They identified with the Nephites of the Book of Mormon, and justified their armed actions against the US government with reference to Mormon end-times [prophecies](#). They are currently awaiting trial.

The Oregon Standoff: A Community Divided, from Vice News.

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