

## Religion 402 Latter Day Saints - Mormons

### The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Temple Visit in Salt Lake City Utah

This is an account of my visit to Salt Lake City's Mormon Temple. This is the second of the Temples for this religion that I have visited, and the beauty that was found in Utah far surpassed the beauty that was found at the temple in Mesa, Arizona. The Salt Lake temple sits on a site of 10 acres and is the first Temple of the Mormon religion to begin construction; however it was the fourth to open. The very name of the city block that the church stands on gives a hint of the importance this site has in the state of Utah. Salt Lake Temple is located in Temple Square in downtown Salt Lake City. The Temple was first opened to the public on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1843. More information on this glorious site can be found at <http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/saltlake/>.

Since I am not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, I was given a tour of the grounds and several other buildings including the Salt Lake Tabernacle and Conference center, but I was not allowed to see the entire Temple. The first thing I noticed was that the entire Temple Square grounds are kept immaculate. Since the coming of the commuter train, Salt Lake City has closed several downtown parking lots and made them into landscaped gardens. It is a true site to behold. I toured the grounds first, then the Temple, next the Salt Lake City Tabernacle, followed by the conference center and the original home of Brigham Young.

Since I was touring the Temple instead of taking part in a meeting, what I learned was far more valuable than simply sitting in a meeting. I was given the tour of the grounds by a nice lady who was in year two of her mission from France. She told me a little about the religion and that she was in Salt Lake City to fulfill her two-year mission assignment. The biggest thing that hit me was the pride that the Mormons had taken in not only the grounds but also the magnificent Temple itself. When I left the grounds, my aunt and I explored the other buildings. At the visitors center section of the Temple there is an interactive panorama that explained how the Mormon religion was started and what Heavenly Father's will was for this planet.

The one thing I found most interesting about the Mormon religion is that they do not, as I had thought, worship the same God that I do. Their God is referred to as Heavenly Father, and Jesus is known as a great prophet but not a savior. They refer to God as Heavenly Father because it is in their doctrine that there are 3 layers of heaven, and truly good Mormon men have it in their power to achieve the highest level of heaven. In this level, they become a Heavenly Father of their very own planet where they then call to their wife that they had on earth, by saying the secret name that he had for her, and together they multiply forever, filling the planet with children. The particulars as to how these children make it from the heavenly realm to the physical planet are not clear to me. It is important to note that women can only reach this level of heaven if their earthly husband does and then decides to call her forth.

Another distinction in the way that the Mormons relate to God is that there are really no mysteries in what happens in the afterlife in this religion. They are told what they need to do, how they are to live, and what steps need to be taken in order to reach distinction in the afterlife. The Mormons have many ceremonies and rites that they teach and these must be done at a Mormon Temple and not just a church building. One such ceremony is to unite the earthly family of a household for all of eternity. This is a covenant that the earthly family makes with the Heavenly Father and must be done in the Temple. For more information on this go to: <http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/mormon/marriage/>

Music is definitely a part of the Mormon religion. It is used to worship the Heavenly Father. The most famous musical group in this religion is the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Although I did not have the pleasure of listening to this group, I was given a tour of the facilities they use to practice. They perform and practice at both the Salt Lake Center Tabernacle and the Conference center. Both the Tabernacle and the Conference centers are glorious sites to behold and both have magnificent organs. The Salt Lake Tabernacle's organ has 11,623 pipes. This organ still has pieces of the original organ built in the 1860's. The Tabernacle itself was built around the acoustical ambience of the building. This, in itself should show the importance of music in the Mormon religion. For more information on the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and their facilities, go to: <http://www.mormontabernaclechoir.org/info/>.

When I had the chance to tour the Home of Brigham Young, the question came up about the doctrine of having multiple wives. It was here that I learned that Joseph Smith had made a decision that Heavenly Father had revealed to him the necessity of taking multiple wives on the frontier. The reason given was that, as many Mormons made the pilgrimage from the eastern United States to Utah, many of the men died, leaving behind their wives and children. According to Joseph Smith, it was revealed to him that only certain men would be allowed to marry these widows, in order to take care of them and their children. This was not ever meant to be for any Mormon man but only the select few that

Heavenly Father revealed to Joseph Smith. Many of these women had their own separate households and were taken care of by a shared husband and subsequently gave birth to children of this shared husband.

After a time polygamy was overturned in the LDS church and any Mormons still practicing this today are not granted affiliation with the official LDS Church. Although my questions were answered, after doing my own research on the subject I learned that the answers given were little more than partial truths and closer to all-out lies. However, they were willing to answer my questions on the subject. For more on the truth of Joseph Smith and his 33 marriages go to:  
<http://www.i4m.com/think/polygamy/polygamy-timeline.htm>

After visiting this Temple my overall reaction is that many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are genuinely happy and joyous people. The religion is deep with history and the great care they take of their tabernacles and temples shows that religion is a very big part of their lives. My biggest impression of this religion is that everyone's fate is in the hands of the men in the religion and that women do not have the freedom to excel in both life and their spirituality that the men do. The one question that still remains for me is why would a loving God and Father, such that the Mormons believe in, give very little care for the women in this church who are subjected to the will of the men in their lives. The other question is on the doctrine that whatever is decided on earth will be held in heaven as the truth. How is a religion to be followed worldwide such as this one if it can change day to day, and just how do they know that the men that they have set up as prophets here on earth actually have the ear of God?