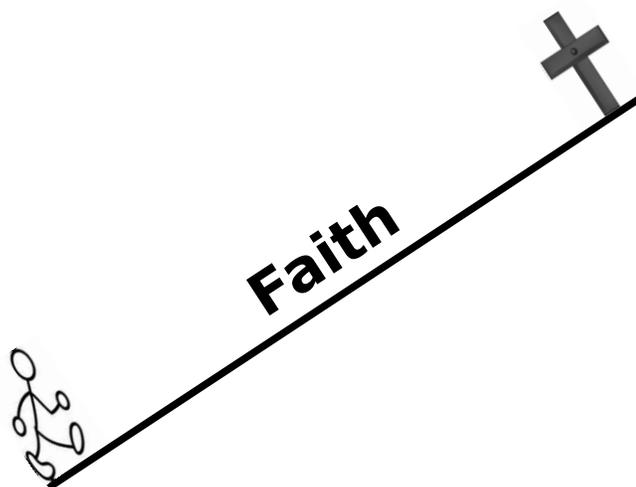


The above diagram represents ten of the most common obstacles both biblical Christians and Latter-day Saints encounter when attempting to understand, share and defend their respective faiths. Any number of these “rocks” may come into play during the course of dialog or debate.

Note that the path to the cross for Latter-day Saints is on an incline. This is because many LDS will suffer incredible loss (e.g. family, friends, social acceptance/status, financial security, etc.) for exchanging the LDS gospel of *works* for the biblical gospel of *grace*.

The below diagram represents the ideal sharing scenario—all potential “rocks” have been cleared from the road to redemption. In other words, the only thing standing between Latter-day Saints and being forgiven of ALL their sins (besides the potential losses mentioned above) is pure and simple faith in the FINISHED work of Christ on the cross and acceptance of His absolutely free gift of salvation.



Rock #7 Power Point

Apostasy



...becomes a rock on the road to redemption when LDS remain unaware that neither "the Restoration" nor Joseph Smith was necessary!

The existence of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints literally hangs upon its doctrine of "the Great Apostasy." The alleged logical progression is as follows:

1. Christ's true church is led by prophets and apostles.
2. Christ's prophets and apostles hold "the keys" of the Melchizedek priesthood authority.
3. Up to and following the death of Christ's NT apostles a great many people apostatized (i.e. "fell away") from their apostolic teachings (a.k.a. "the Great Apostasy").
4. As a result God took the Melchizedek priesthood authority from the earth and thus the succession of authoritative prophets and apostles ended and "the fulness [*sic*] of the gospel" was lost.
5. The Melchizedek priesthood, "the fulness of the gospel," and thus Christ's true church, were *restored* through the prophet Joseph Smith.

The aim of this lesson is to demonstrate the apparent contradictions between the LDS doctrine of "the Great Apostasy" and (1) its modern revelation concerning the mission of the apostle John and the three Nephite witnesses and (2) the biblical revelation of how Christ's church is preserved by God's sovereign grace.

The Apostle John, the Three Nephites & Joseph Smith

The apostle John neither died nor apostatized.

- According to LDS Scripture Jesus granted that John would remain on earth to “bring souls unto [Him].”
- **Question:** What need was there for Joseph Smith and “the Restoration” of Christ’s true Church when LDS

Scripture informs us that (1) John never died and (2) he *remained* on earth to preach, and convert people to, Christ’s gospel?

2 And I [John] said unto him [Jesus]: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. 3 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. (Doctrine and Covenants 7:2-3)

The three Nephite witnesses neither died nor apostatized.

- According to LDS Scripture Jesus granted that these Nephites would not die in order to “preach the gospel of Christ unto all people.”
- **Question:** What need was there for Joseph Smith and “the Restoration” of Christ’s true Church when, like

John, (1) three Nephites never died and (2) they *remained* on earth to preach, and convert people to, Christ’s gospel?

[Jesus declared] 8 And ye shall never endure the pains of death 23 And it came to pass that thus they did go forth among all the people of Nephi, and did preach the gospel of Christ unto all people up the face of the land; and they were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ, and thus the people of that generation were blessed, according to the word of Jesus. (3 Nephi 28:8a, 23)

The Apostle John, the Melchizedek Priesthood & Joseph Smith

When did the apostle John allegedly receive the Melchizedek priesthood?

- “These keys were given at the transfiguration to these three Apostles [Peter, James and John], and they in turn gave them to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in this dispensation” (*Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, 2001, p. 18). Therefore, John received the Melchizedek priesthood *before* “the Great Apostasy.”

How long was John to retain the Melchizedek Priesthood?

- “ ... thou [John] shalt tarry until I [Jesus] come in my glory ... and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come” (D&C 7:3b, 7b). In other words, Peter, James and John were to *retain* the Melchizedek priesthood until Christ’s Second Coming.

Why did John need to retain the Melchizedek priesthood?

- “ ... that I [John] may live and bring souls unto thee [Jesus] ... and minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth” (D&C 7:3b, 6c).

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. 2 And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. 3 And the Lord said unto me [John]: 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. 4 And for this cause the Lord said unto Peter: If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? For he desired of me that he might bring souls unto me, but thou desirest that thou mightest speedily come unto me in my kingdom. 5 I say unto thee, Peter, this was a good desire; but my beloved has desired that he might do more, or a greater work yet among men than what he has before done. 6 Yea, he has undertaken a greater work; therefore I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel; he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth. 7 And I will make thee [Peter] to minister for him [John] and for thy brother James; and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come. (Doctrine and Covenants 7:1-7)

"The Great Apostasy" Clarified or Contradicted?



"Under apostolic direction a kingdom of priests again was found on earth. But after the apostles ceased to minister among mortals, there was no one left holding the keys to authorize a person to be ordained to any priestly office, and in this manner the Lord took the priesthood from the earth."

Bruce R. McConkie, LDS Apostle/Doctrinal Scholar

Mormon Doctrine, 1966, p. 478



"From the facts already stated it is evident that the Church was literally driven from the earth; in the first ten centuries immediately following the ministry of Christ the authority of the Holy Priesthood was lost from among men, and no human power could restore it. But the Lord in His mercy provided for the reestablishment of His Church in the last days, and for the last time This restoration was effected by the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith, who, together with Oliver Cowdery, in 1829, received the Aaronic Priesthood under the hands of John the Baptist; and later the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hand of the former-day apostles Peter, James, and John."

James E. Talmage, LDS Apostle/Doctrinal Scholar

Articles of Faith, 1984, p. 185

- **Question:**

How can the absence of priesthood-holding apostles culminate in Christ's Church being "driven from the earth" when, according to LDS Scripture, the apostle John *remained* on earth and *retained* the Melchizedek priesthood to win souls for Christ? The same question could reasonably be raised concerning the three Nephite witnesses.

God Always Preserves a Remnant By His Grace!

Romans 10:21 NIV

²¹ But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

*(v. 21)–God DID NOT preserve a remnant because of Israel's obedience, but **in spite of** Israel's disobedience.*

Romans 11:1-6 NIV

¹ I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

*(v. 1)–The LDS-alleged "Great Apostasy" requires that God DID NOT preserve a faithful remnant, which stands in stark contrast to God's preservation of **apostate Israel**.*

² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah--how he appealed to God against Israel:

³ "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me?"

(v. 3)–Even Elijah the prophet was certain of a complete apostasy, but was certainly mistaken.

⁴ And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

*(v. 4)–How many God reserves may be questioned; **that** He reserves **MAY NOT!***

⁵ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

*(vv. 5-6)–That God's remnant is chosen by grace (both in OT and NT times) conflicts with the LDS doctrine of "the Great Apostasy" and "the Restoration." There is no need for God to restore that which HE PRESERVES on the basis of His GRACE **instead of our WORKS!***

- **Question:** How can any apostasy result in God taking Christ's Church from the earth when God always preserves a remnant by His GRACE and NOT our WORKS?

The Biblical Verdict on "the Great Apostasy"



*"And I [Jesus] say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
(Matthew 16:18 KJV)*

*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.
(Ephesians 3:21 KJV)*

- **Matthew 16:18**—Because the church (*ekklesia*) is the "assembly of people" Jesus Christ (and not man) is building, it CANNOT universally apostatize.
- **Ephesians 3:21**—It is difficult to reconcile Christ being glorified "in the church ... throughout all ages" with a 1,700-year universal apostasy required by the LDS doctrine of "the Great Apostasy."