

7 By Their Fruits

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Christ declared that a true prophet could be determined by his “fruits” (Matthew 7:15-20). What fruits define a prophet? What are the fruits of the prophet Joseph Smith? The obvious ones include the Book of Mormon, latter-day scripture, the church and its priesthood organization and even prophecies and predictions. But the real fruits of a true prophet are described by Moroni in the Book of Mormon as a call to “believe in Christ.”

16 ...for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade *to believe in Christ*, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

17 But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and *believe not in Christ*, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him. (Moroni 7:16-17)

Moroni continues to speak of the “fruits” of good and evil:

10 Wherefore, a man being evil *cannot do that which is good*; neither will he give a good gift.

11 For behold, *a bitter fountain cannot bring forth good water; neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water*; wherefore, a man being *a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ*; and if he follow Christ he cannot be a servant of the devil.

12 Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.

13 But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

14 Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil. (Moroni 7:10-14)

The fruits of a prophet are not found in the prophet himself or in his character for “there are none righteous no not one” (Romans 3:10) and “none good but God” (Mark 10:18). The real fruit of a prophet is in his testimony and witness of Christ and the Atonement. The true prophet will stand as a witness of Christ at all times, in all things and in all places. John teaches “the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Christ” (Revelation 19:10). The declaration of a true prophet, then, will be to “come unto Christ” through faith in the Atonement, faith unto repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

13 And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy. (Mosiah 3:13)

Thus, the fruits of any true prophet are evidenced by his testimony and the resulting relationship converted believers have with the Atonement and the process of salvation. A prophet's fruit can be openly seen in the impact that his witness and testimony has on the character and understanding of the Atonement that his converts have. If the individuals and organizations that focused on destroying Mormonism spent the same time, energy and resources teaching about their faith and testimony of Christ instead of trying to destroy others, their success and conversions to Christ would be a hundredfold.

Latter-day Saints are commanded **not** to 'revile against revilers'. Apologetics, though popular with supposed intellectuals, are not the order of the day (Apologetics is the defense and justification of religious doctrine). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

Let the Elders be exceedingly careful about unnecessarily disturbing and harrowing up the feelings of the people. Remember that *your business is to preach* the gospel in all humility and meekness, and warn sinners to repent and come to Christ. (*TPJS*, p.43)

Avoid contentions and *vain disputes* with men of corrupt minds *who do not desire to know the truth*. Remember that "it is a day of warning and not a day of many words." If they receive not your testimony in one place, flee to another, remembering to cast no reflections, nor throw out any bitter sayings. If you do your duty, it will be just as well with you, as though all men embraced the gospel. (*TPJS*, p.43)

The truth has no need of defense. The true Christian character does not seek to destroy the faith of others or defend their own beliefs in an apologetic venue (D&C 31:9). A true Christian character loves others and seeks to bring all unto Christ and building their faith in the Atonement, not necessarily to Mormonism: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." (Galatians 5:14-15)

The fruits of a prophet are the "fruits of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 9:10; Philippians 1:11), and the fruits of the spirit will be found in the character of the truly converted.

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.
19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.
(Galatians 5:16-24)

This means the fruits of Joseph Smith or Mormonism are not found in the human frailties of the leaders or the imperfections of history and the growing pains of organizational refinement, but in the *converted members*. The fruits of Joseph Smith and Mormonism are seen in the characters of its members as manifested by their desire to be better people and better Christians. These ‘fruits’ are evident in the life-changing relationships that exist among them, their God and their fellow man, as taught by the Church of Jesus Christ.

Anti-Mormon websites tend to *focus on historical inconsistencies and the human frailties, imperfections, and statements* of past leaders taken out of context. Their objective is, **first**: to *destroy faith in modern revelation*, and **second**: to *destroy belief in the plan of salvation and happiness*. These sites target personal histories and the policies of a young struggling church to convince the reader that ‘Mormons’ are brainwashed to believe what they do. Their intention is to snare the unwary and those who are easily swayed in the mistaken belief that "they" can't put anything on the internet that isn't true. The recent attacks are aimed at Joseph Smith and the statements of many of the priesthood leadership of the church. The impetuous apostle, Peter would have never been accepted as a church leader if his historical frailties and flaws were the focus rather than the changed lives that resulted from the divine message he brought.

The test of *classic* literature is always internal, not external. The circumstances under which something was written and the author's personality, habits or imperfections, are not nearly as important as the way the literature makes one feel and how it affects the heart and mind. The real fruits of Joseph Smith are the positive changes made in the Christian and (Mormon) character as their relationship with the Savior and Atonement is deepened by their faith and knowledge.

What is the message of The Book of Mormon? The text speaks for itself of the *internal* test:

—Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to *the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations*—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ. (Title Page Book of Mormon)

25 ...I shall deliver up these plates unto him, *exhorting all men to come unto God, the Holy One of Israel, and believe in prophesying, and in revelations*, and in the ministering of angels, and in the gift of speaking with tongues, and in the gift of interpreting languages, and in all things which are good; for there is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord; and that which is evil cometh from the devil.

26 And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should *come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption*. Yea, *come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him*, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth, ye will be saved. (Omni 1:25-26)

Moroni, the last prophet-teacher, sums up the whole purpose of the record as he concludes the history of his people and closes this inspired compilation for the next fourteen hundred years. Every honest and sincere reader can come to no other conclusion than: Christ, the Atonement, and

man's relationship with Christ and His gospel are the central messages of the Book of Mormon, and by extension the message of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

33 And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:32-33)

What is the message and testimony of Joseph Smith?

The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the apostles and prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it. But in connection with these, we believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost, the power of faith, the enjoyment of the spiritual gifts according to the will of God, the restoration of the house of Israel, and the final triumph of truth. (*TPJS*, p.121)

22 And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God. (D&C 76:22-24)

Christ **has always been and will ever be** the foundation of Mormonism and true Christianity. Jesus Christ and the Atonement *is the central message* of not only the Prophet Joseph Smith's work but also all scripture. Christ is the central message of the Church and should be the focus of all priesthood leaders since the First Vision.