

# Weblog: Ravi Zacharias, Rich Mouw Speak in Mormon Tabernacle

Compiled by Ted Olsen | posted 11/16/2004

## Indian-born apologist notes differences with LDS, Fuller head offers apology

On Sunday night, evangelical apologist [Ravi Zacharias](#) gave one of his frequent messages on defending Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life in a culture that rejects truth claims. But the pulpit differed radically from Zacharias's usual lecterns, for it was in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.

Zacharias is actually the last person, Mormon or not, who will speak at the Tabernacle for at least 18 months—the building, which was constructed between 1853 and 1893, is undergoing substantial [renovations](#).

Asked to speak on "Who is the Truth?" Zacharias was not expected to highlight many differences between historic Christian theology and Mormonism, but apparently he did mention them. [The Deseret Morning News](#) reports:

He spoke of the "exclusivity and sufficiency of Jesus Christ," noting that he asserted an exclusive truth claim in his declaration as "the Way, the Truth and the Life." While he acknowledged that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints differ in many of their views from historic Christianity, he emphasized much of what they share in reverence for a being both consider the divine Savior of mankind.

[The Salt Lake Tribune](#) offers a similar summary, saying Zacharias acknowledged there are doctrinal differences—including some that are deep—between traditional Christianity and the LDS faith.

His hour-long sermon emphasized aspects of Christian doctrine for which Mormons have a different understanding, such as sin, salvation through the Cross, and the Trinity.

But his overarching message—that Jesus Christ is the answer to the longing in all human hearts—was one that resonated with both evangelical Christians and Mormons ... .

The sermon, which filled the Tabernacle to capacity with about 7,000 evangelical Protestants, Mormons, and others, received a standing ovation.

But Zacharias, who [spoke elsewhere](#) in Utah last week, wasn't the only evangelical on the platform. Michael Card led music, and Fuller Seminary president Richard Mouw gave an introductory sermon.

And it'll be Mouw, not Zacharias, that Utahns will remember, says *The Deseret Morning News*. He offered "a stunningly candid apology to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and [noted] that 'friendship has not come easily between our communities.' He dubbed the evening 'historic' and apologized that evangelicals 'have often misrepresented the faith and beliefs of the Latter-day Saints.'"

Mouw's full remarks are not available online (neither are Zacharias's, but [Standing Together Ministries](#), which organized the talk, is [selling CDs and DVDs](#)). But here are the full quotes that made the papers:

- "Let me state it clearly. We evangelicals have sinned against you."
- "We've often seriously misrepresented the beliefs and practices of members of the LDS faith."
- "It's a terrible thing to bear false witness. ... We've told you what you believe without first asking you."
- "I'm not being melodramatic when I say this is an historic occasion."
- "I remain convinced there are serious issues of difference that are of eternal consequence, but now we can discuss them as friends."

The best quote, however, is from an unnamed pastor quoted in *The Deseret Morning News*. Saying he wanted to see the evangelical-Mormon meeting become an annual event, the pastor added, "Don't you all have a bigger place right across the street?" That'd be the Mormon Temple. And no, non-Mormons aren't allowed there.

Those interested in the story may also find interesting this [Amazon.com list](#) of Zacharias's books by a Mormon, a few links on [Mormon love](#) for [C.S. Lewis](#)—which may be why Utah papers are likely to call Zacharias a modern Lewis.

One more note: Several news outlets, including an [earlier Christianity Today Weblog](#), have noted that Zacharias is apparently the first evangelical to speak at the Tabernacle since Dwight L. Moody. After Weblog's previous posting on this subject, we received more information from [Ronald V. Huggins](#), assistant professor of historical and theological studies at Salt Lake Theological Seminary: D.L. Moody's 1871 appearance in the Salt Lake Tabernacle is mentioned in the *Salt Lake Deseret Evening News* (Sat. June 3, 1871, p. 3 and Mon., June 5, 1871, p. 3), which has Moody appearing there with the singer Philip Phillips and Dr. J.H. Vincent, editor of the *Teacher's Journal*.

Moody preached a sermon entitled "Salvation for All." A dual correction is called for in relation to Weblog's statement: "Ravi Zacharias has reportedly become the first evangelical invited to speak in the Mormon Tabernacle since Brigham Young extended an invitation to Dwight L. Moody in 1871."

First, the claim that Brigham Young extended an invitation to Moody is an unsubstantiated embellishment that has arisen in the process of circulating the story about Ravi's coming to Salt Lake. No evidence is known to exist suggesting that he invited Moody.

Second, Moody's 1871 visit cannot be the last time an evangelical spoke in the Mormon Tabernacle. Moody himself spoke there again on Sunday, April 2, 1899 (See *Deseret Evening News*, Mon. Apr. 3, 1899, p. 8).

The account of Moody and Sankey's 1880 visit to Salt Lake City in Ira Sankey's *Life and the Story of the Gospel Hymns* (p. 78-79), with its inaccurate statement that afterward "Mr. Moody never visited Salt Lake City again," has naturally given rise to confusion.

## Update

The unnamed pastor in *The Deseret Morning News* was actually [Craig Hazen](#), Director of the M.A. Program in Christian Apologetics at Biola University. And the bigger place right across the street he was referring to was apparently a 21,000-seat conference center, not the Mormon Temple. Sorry for the confusion.

