

Terminology Differences Between LDS and the Bible

By Sandra Tanner

Introduction

Whenever an evangelical Christian and a Latter-day Saint engage in a doctrinal discussion they encounter the problem of terminology. LDS leaders use the standard vocabulary of Christianity but with radically different definitions. A Christian should never take for granted that his/her LDS friend understands common Christian terms in the biblical way.

Because the Bible has many warnings about false prophets (Matthew 24:11, 24; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13; 1 John 4:1) and people teaching strange doctrines (2 Peter 2:12; Galatians 1:6-8; Hebrews 13:9), it is essential that we understand what the Bible says on various doctrines.

The references below will demonstrate that the LDS Church is indeed teaching a different god and a counterfeit gospel, thus offering a false hope.

The following list of Christian terms will be defined by LDS sources and then by biblical quotes. While this is not a complete list of terminology differences, it will cover the most basic ones.

GODHEAD

LDS: Father and Son are resurrected men with physical bodies. Holy Ghost is a separate man with a spiritual body. Three totally separate Gods. God is married. Other Gods for other worlds. (D&C 130:22; Teachings, pp. 345-346, pp. 370-373; Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 10-12)

BIBLE: God is not a man. (Num. 23:19) He has always been God. (Psa. 90:2; Mal. 3:6; Hab. 1:12; Rom. 1:22-25) Only one God. (Isa. 43:10-11; 44:6; 45:21-22) Father is Spirit and invisible. (John 4:24; 1 Tim. 1:17)

JESUS CHRIST

LDS: Literally our elder brother, born to Heavenly Parents in the premortal life. Jesus, Lucifer and humans are all the same species and are brothers and sisters. (Gospel Principles, pp. 11, 17, 18)

BIBLE: Fully God, not a subordinate deity. Eternal. (Isa. 9:6; John 8:58; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 13:8; John 1:1-4, 14; Col. 1:16-17)

PREMORTAL LIFE

LDS: Teach that everyone existed in heaven before born on earth. We have existed eternally. (D&C 93:29; PGP:Bk of Abr 3:21-22; Teachings, pp. 352-354)

BIBLE: Only Christ existed before mortality, not man. (John 8:58; Col. 1:17) Our existence started on earth. (Zec. 12:1; 1 Cor. 15:46)

THE FALL

LDS: Fall was a blessing. It brought mortality, ability to have children and physical death. Adam was given conflicting commandments and was supposed to fall. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 111-116; Gospel Principles, pp. 31-33; 2 Nephi 2:25; Mormon Doctrine, pp. 268-269)

BIBLE: God intended obedience. Gen. 1:28. God tempts no one. (James 1:13-14). Man is sinful. (Rom. 5:12; 8:5-8; 1 Cor. 2:14)

VIRGIN BIRTH

LDS: Believe God, as a resurrected physical man, is literal Father of Jesus—same manner in which men are conceived on earth. Believe Matt. 1:18 is in error. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 546-547, 742)

BIBLE: Mary was “with child of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:30-35)

SIN

LDS: Specific acts, not man’s basic nature. Must know act is wrong to be a sin. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 550, 735-736)

BIBLE: We are in spiritual rebellion until conversion. (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 5:6) We do not just commit sins; we are basically sinful. (Matt. 1:21; Jer. 17:9; Luke 5:32)

FORGIVENESS

LDS: Granted at end of process of repentance and reformed behavior (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 292-298; Gospel Principles, pp. 75-77, 123; Doctrine of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 133-134)

BIBLE: Complete forgiveness granted the moment we turn to Christ. (Mark 2:5; Col. 2:13-14; Eph. 1:6-7)

SALVATION BY GRACE

LDS: Believe Christ’s death brought release from grave and universal resurrection. Salvation by grace is universal resurrection. Beyond this, man must earn his place in heaven. Saved by grace after all we can do. (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 25:23; Mormon Doctrine pp. 669-671)

BIBLE: Salvation is not limited to universal resurrection but gift of God to those who believe. (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 9:28; Eph. 2:8-9)

REDEEMED

LDS: From mortal death only. Not same as Eternal Life. (Doctrine of Salvation, vol. 2, pp. 10-15)

BIBLE: Redeemed from more than mortal death; redeemed from spiritual death and given Eternal Life. (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1; Gal. 4:4-5)

GOSPEL

LDS: Doctrines and commandments of the LDS Church. True gospel restored by Joseph Smith. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 331, 334; Doctrine of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 156-159)

BIBLE: Good news of Christ’s death and resurrection as atonement for our sins. (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 1:6-8)

BORN AGAIN

LDS: Baptism into the LDS Church. (Mormon Doctrine, p. 101)

BIBLE: We are spiritually dead until our spiritual birth. (1 Peter 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:17; John 3:7, 14, 15)

TRUE CHURCH

LDS: Only the Mormon Church. The true church was taken from the earth until Joseph Smith restored it. (D&C 1:30; 115:3, 4; Mormon Doctrine, pp. 133, 136)

BIBLE: Not an organization; as born-again Christians we are part of God's Church. (1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 16:18; 18:19-20)

AUTHORITY - PRIESTHOOD

LDS: Believe only LDS have authority to baptize, ordain, etc. Have two-part system of priesthood—Melchizedek and Aaronic. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 3, pp. 80-81; D&C 107:1-21)

BIBLE: Christ brought end to Aaronic priesthood and is the only High Priest after the manner of Melchizedek. (Heb. 5:9-10; 7:11-17; 7:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:2)

BAPTISM

LDS: Must be performed by LDS priesthood. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 69-72)

BIBLE: Emphasis is on Believer—not priesthood authority. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:37-41; 16:30-34)

SONS OF GOD

LDS: We were all born in heaven, prior to earth, as literal spirit children of God and his wife. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 589-590)

BIBLE: Spiritually adopted at conversion. (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26)

ETERNAL LIFE

LDS: Exaltation in Celestial Kingdom; godhood and ability to bear children in heaven. Must have a temple recommend and be sealed in Mormon temple. (D&C 131:1-4; 132:19-25, 30, 55)

BIBLE: Not limited to certain ones in the top part of heaven. No mention of parenthood or temple marriage but is given to all true believers. (1 John 5:12-13; Luke 20:35-36)

LDS References:

Book of Mormon

Doctrine and Covenants

Pearl of Great Price

Mormon Doctrine

by Bruce R. McConkie, 1979

Doctrines of Salvation

by Joseph Fielding Smith

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith

by Joseph Fielding Smith

Gospel Principles,

published by the LDS Church, 1995

Doctrines of the Gospel - Student Manual,

published by the LDS Church, 2000

IMMORTALITY

LDS: Universal gift. The ability to go to heaven and live forever but not same as Eternal Life. Lower level of heaven and unable to bear children. (D&C 14:7; Mormon Doctrine, pp. 237, 376-377, 670)

BIBLE: Makes no distinction between immortality and eternal life. No second class citizens in heaven. (2 Tim. 1:10; John 3:15-16)

HELL

LDS: Hell as an institution is eternal—inmates come and go as in jail, but do not spend eternity there. Temporary. After debt is paid they will go to the Telestial Kingdom. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 349-351)

BIBLE: No mention of people getting out of Hell. (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 13:24-43, 47-50; Luke 16:26)

HEAVEN

LDS: Divided into three kingdoms—Celestial, Terrestrial and Telestial. A place for almost everyone. (D&C 88:16-20; Misuse of 1 Cor. 15:40-41)

BIBLE: Only mentions two conditions—everlasting punishment or eternal life. (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-10)

KINGDOM OF GOD

LDS: Means Celestial Kingdom. Only those in the Celestial Kingdom are in God's presence. Those in the Terrestrial or Telestial Kingdoms are not in the presence of the Father. (D&C 76:50-88; 131:1-4; 132:16-17)

BIBLE: All redeemed will be in God's presence. (Rev. 21:1-3) All believers are part of Kingdom. (Matt. 13:41-43)

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