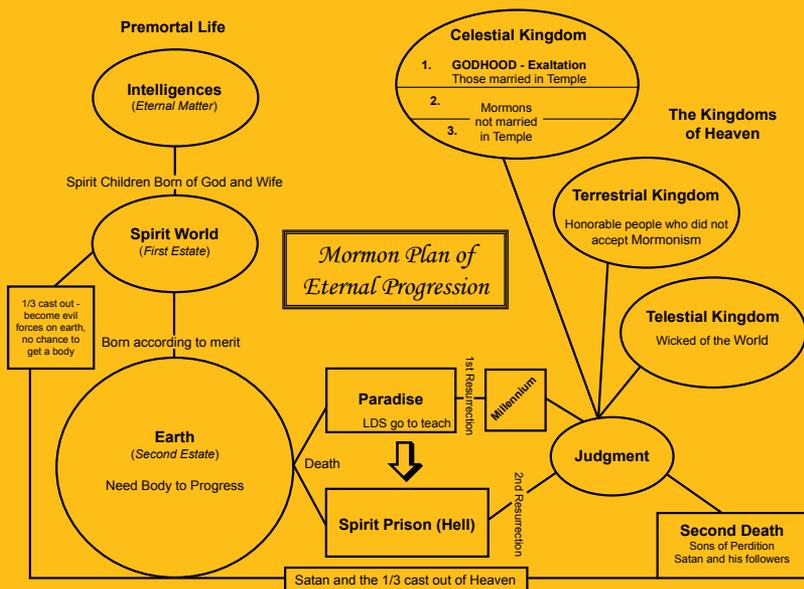


41 UNIQUE TEACHINGS OF THE LDS CHURCH



By Sandra Tanner

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2013

**Utah Lighthouse Ministry
www.utlm.org**



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Introduction

Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church), claimed that in the spring of 1820, when he was fourteen years old, there was a significant revival in his neighborhood. He recounted that “Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.” While Joseph Smith favored the Methodists, his mother, two brothers and his sister joined the Presbyterian Church. [1 *Pearl of Great Price* Joseph Smith—History 1:7-8.]

Then, according to the *Pearl of Great Price*, Smith went out into the woods to pray for wisdom concerning which church he should join. Smith reported that in answer to this prayer God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him as two separate, distinct beings. They told him not to join any of the churches “for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt.” [2 *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:5-19.]

On the basis of this vision, Mormons declare that God has rejected all other churches, and that only the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the authority to act for God. They also point to this vision as proof that God the Father and Jesus Christ both have physical, resurrected bodies and are totally separate gods.

The LDS Church teaches that when Christ first set up His church in Israel it contained both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods. They claim that this authority is necessary for one to act in the name of God and perform such rites as baptism, priesthood ordination and eternal marriages. Mormons claim that the early Christian church contained all the same teachings as the LDS embrace today. However, with the death of Christ’s apostles, they believe the church fell into total apostasy, instituted false doctrine, changed the scriptures and lost the authority to minister in God’s name. [3 *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, Religion 430 and 431, LDS Church, 2010, pp. 59-63.]

Thus the “true” church of Christ was not on the earth from approximately 100 AD to 1830 AD when God restored it through Joseph Smith. He claimed that on May 15, 1829, John the Baptist appeared to him and his associate, Oliver Cowdery, and bestowed on them the keys of the Aaronic priesthood, thus giving them the authority to perform valid baptisms. [4 *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:68-71.]

Smith claimed that a month later Peter, James and John appeared to him and Cowdery and bestowed on them the Melchizedek priesthood. This priesthood authority, said to have been lost since the time of the original apostles, is necessary to ordain any man as a minister of God. With these two priesthoods restored Smith proclaimed that he had the correct authority to re-establish the “only true church.” [5 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 20:1-4; 22:1-4; 13:1; 27:8; 84:18; *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 2:68-70.]

The LDS concept of a total apostasy contradicts Christ’s promise that “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18 KJV). Also, the book of Hebrews explains that the Levitical (or Aaronic) priesthood was brought to an end with the death of Christ and that Christ is our only eternal High Priest “after the order of Melchisedec.” (See Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-16; 5:1-10; 6:20; 7:11-28)

In March of 1830 Joseph Smith published his new book of scripture, the Book of Mormon, financed by Book of Mormon witness, Martin Harris. This new scripture purports to be an account of God’s dealings with three migrations to the New World. The first group fled to the New World after the time of the Tower of Babel, the second and third groups were Israelites who left Jerusalem and migrated to the Americas at approximately 600 BC. Also recounted in the book are their wars, divisions, doctrines and the appearance of Christ in the New World shortly after his crucifixion. The story ends at approximately 421 AD when the last of the righteous leaders hid the sacred record of his people away in a hill, to preserve it until God saw fit to bring it forth to the world through Joseph Smith. A few weeks after the publication of his book, Smith organized his new church in New York on April 6, 1830.

Smith’s fledgling church adopted many of the teachings of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, early advocates of the need for

a restoration of New Testament Christianity. They rejected church creeds, taught baptismal regeneration, rejected infant baptism and had communion every week.

Originally, Joseph Smith titled his church “The Church of Christ,” but in 1834 it was changed to “The Church of the Latter Day Saints.” [6 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 62-63.] Then in 1838 Smith received a revelation to change the name to “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 115:3-4). [7 *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, Religion 324 and 325, LDS Church, 2001, p. 286.]

The Mormons have four books they consider scripture: the Bible (King James Version), the Book of Mormon (the purported record of the inhabitants of the Americas prior to Columbus), the *Doctrine and Covenants* (mainly Joseph Smith’s revelations) and the *Pearl of Great Price* (the writings of Moses and Abraham, an extract from Smith’s Bible revision and a condensed account of Smith’s early life).

One of the unique teachings of Joseph Smith was that God was once a mortal on another earth system who, along with his wife, eventually achieved godhood. Man’s goal is to attain this same exaltation. Today the LDS Church teaches that eternal life is acquired by diligently following all of the LDS doctrines, including regular participation in their secret temple rituals.

In 2011 LDS Apostle Jeffrey Holland made the following comments to a group of national Christian leaders:

Like you, we have no desire to compromise our doctrinal distinctiveness or forfeit the beliefs that make us who we are. We are eager, however, not to be misunderstood, not to be accused of beliefs we do not hold, and not to have our commitment to Christ and His gospel dismissed out of hand, to say nothing of being demonized in the process. [8 Jeffrey R. Holland, “Standing Together for the Cause of Christ,” *Ensign* (August 2012).]

We agree with Mr. Holland’s plea to accurately portray the LDS Church’s beliefs. Therefore, the reader will be pleased to know that the majority of quotes in this booklet are from either LDS scriptures or from their current teaching manuals.

When discussing the differences between Christianity and Mormonism, it is typical to hear comments that the LDS faith is not that different from other churches. However, the following material will demonstrate that the unique teachings of Mormonism are not shared with standard Christianity.

The LDS Church officially uses the King James Version of the Bible, but due to its archaic wording we will be using the New International Version in this study. [9 To read and compare various versions of the Bible, see (www.Biblegateway.com) (www.blueletterbible.com) (www.biblestudytools.com) or (biblecc.com)]

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41 Unique Teachings of the LDS Church

1. God the Father was once a finite mortal on another planet. After his death and resurrection he progressed to become the God of this world.

In 1844 Joseph Smith preached his famous sermon on the doctrine of God:

I want to ask this congregation, every man, woman and child, to answer the question in their own heart, what kind of a being God is? . . . I am going to tell you **how God came to be God**. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. [10 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Deseret Book Company, 1975, vol. 6, pp. 302-317.]

A lengthy extract from Smith's sermon is quoted in the 2004 manual *Presidents of the Church Student Manual*:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. . . . I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—. . .

These are incomprehensible ideas to some, they are simple. It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that **he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did;** and I will show it from the Bible. [11 *Presidents of the Church Student Manual*, Religion 345, LDS Church, 2004, p. 89.]

I will prove that the world is wrong, by showing what God is. I am going to inquire after God; for I want you all to know Him, and to be familiar with Him; and if I am bringing you to a knowledge of Him, all persecutions against me ought to cease. You will then know that I am His servant; for I speak as one having authority.

God An Exalted Man

I will go back to the beginning before the world was, to show what kind of a being God is. What sort of a being was God in the beginning? Open your ears and hear, all ye ends of the earth, for I am going to prove it to you by the Bible, and to tell you the designs of God in relation to the human race, and why He interferes with the affairs of man.

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by His power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another.

In order to understand the subject of the dead, for consolation of those who mourn for the loss of their friends, it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how He came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.

These are incomprehensible ideas to some, but they are simple. It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another, and that He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did; and I will show it from the Bible. †

Eternal Life to Know God and Jesus Christ

I wish I was in a suitable place to tell it, and that I had the trump of an archangel, so that I could tell the story in such a manner that persecution would cease forever. What did Jesus say? (Mark it, Elder Rigdon!) The scriptures inform us that Jesus said, and the Father hath power in himself, even so hath the Son power— to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down his body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. Do you believe it? If you do not believe it you do not

Joseph Smith's King Follett Sermon

[12 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 305. Also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 343-345 and *Ensign* magazine (April-May 1971).]

Brigham Young, the second prophet of the LDS Church, also taught that God had once been a mortal. In the 1997 manual *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, he is quoted as saying:

The great architect, manager and superintendent, controller and dictator [absolute ruler] who guides this work is out of sight to our natural eyes. He [God] lives on another world; he is in another state of existence; **he has passed the ordeals we are now passing through**; he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, **life and death of this mortality, for he has passed through the whole of it, and has received his crown and exaltation** and holds the keys and the power of this Kingdom; . . . [13 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, LDS Church, 1997, p. 30.]

On page 34 of the same manual we read:

The doctrine that **God was once a man and has progressed to become a God** is unique to this Church. How do you feel, knowing that God, **through His own experience**, “knows all that we know regarding the toils [and] sufferings” of mortality? [14 *Ibid.*, p. 34.]

The LDS Church continues to teach that God has not always been God, but achieved this status in the distant past. In their 2002 teaching manual, *Gospel Fundamentals*, we read:

It will help us to remember that our Father in Heaven was once a man who lived on an earth, the same as we do. He became our Father in Heaven by overcoming problems, just as we have to do on this earth. [15 *Gospel Fundamentals*, LDS Church, 2002, p. 204.]

However, the Bible declares that God has always been God:

“I the Lord do not change. . . .” (Malachi 3:6)

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:2)

2. God the Father has a tangible, resurrected body of flesh and bones.

In 1843 Joseph Smith gave the following revelation:

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22)

That same year Smith preached:

There is much said about God and the Godhead. . . . If I were to testify that the Christian world were wrong on this point, my testimony would be true. . . . The Son doeth what He hath seen the Father do: then the Father hath some day laid down His life and taken it again; so He has a body of His own; . . . [16 Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Deseret Book, 1977, pp. 311-312.]

Speaking in 1998, LDS Apostle M. Russell Ballard emphasized the same point:

God the Father and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, are **glorified, exalted, resurrected beings**, and from the moment of the appearance of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith, we have known their true nature. [17 M. Russell Ballard, “Building Bridges of Understanding,” *Ensign* (June 1998): p. 62.]

In the 2002 manual *Gospel Fundamentals* we read:

Father in Heaven: A perfect being who looks like a mortal man but has a resurrected body of flesh and bones. He is the Father of our spirits, to whom we pray. [18 *Gospel Fundamentals*, p. 280.]

In 1985 LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained that when our Heavenly Father was a mortal, prior to achieving godhood, he successfully obeyed all the requirements to achieve exaltation:

The Father is a glorified, **perfected, resurrected, exalted man** who **worked out his salvation by obedience** to the same laws he has given to us so that we may do the same. [19 Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, Deseret Book, 1985, p. 64.]

If our Heavenly Father was once a mortal, then there must have been another god in charge of that world.

Contrary to this, the Bible declares:

God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. (Numbers 23:19)

According to the Bible, God has always been God:

I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. (Isaiah 45:5)

*Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged **the glory of the immortal God** for images made to look like **a mortal human being** and birds and animals and reptiles. . . . They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. (Romans 1:22-25)*

*Your righteousness is **everlasting** and your law is true. (Psalm 119:142)*

3. The Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three totally separate and distinct beings, who can only be in one place at one time.

The 2010 LDS college-level publication, *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, quoted LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie:

“Though each God in the Godhead is a personage, **separate and distinct** from each of the others, yet they are ‘one God’ . . . meaning that they are united as one in the attributes of perfection.

. . . **Each occupies space and is and can be in but one place at one time**, but each has power and influence that is everywhere present.” [20 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 8.]

Further on in the same manual we read this quote from Joseph Fielding Smith:

“As a Spirit Personage the Holy Ghost has size and dimensions. He does not fill the immensity of space, and **cannot be everywhere present in person at the same time.**” [21 *Ibid.*, p. 11.]

In 1844 Joseph Smith preached on the differences between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost:

I will preach on the plurality of Gods. . . . I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and **three Gods.** [22 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 370.]

The Bible declares that God is a spirit and fills the universe.

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)

“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:23-24)

The Bible also teaches that Jesus is one with God the Father:

“I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)

“We are not stoning you for any good work,” they [the Jews] replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” (John 10:33)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8)

4. God the Father is under the jurisdiction of a higher god who, in turn, has multiple gods above him.

Preaching in 1844, Joseph Smith explained that God had achieved godhood, the same as others had done before him:

These are the first principles of consolation. . . . they shall be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and the **same exaltation**, until you arrive at the station of a **God**, and ascend the throne of eternal power, **the same as those who have gone before**. What did Jesus do? Why; I do the things I saw my Father do when worlds came rolling into existence. **My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling**, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. **He will then take a higher exaltation**, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and **inherits what God did before**; and God is thus glorified . . . [23 *History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 306.]

Further on in the same sermon Joseph Smith preached:

Oh, ye lawyers, ye doctors, and ye priests, who have persecuted me. I want to let you know that the Holy Ghost knows something as well as you do. **The head God called together the Gods and sat in grand council** to bring forth the world. . . . In the beginning, **the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods**; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it. [24 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 348-349; See also *Doctrines of the Gospel* chapter 7.]

Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the LDS Church and nephew of Joseph Smith, taught that there were Father Gods prior to our Heavenly Father achieving godhood:

Our Father in heaven, according to the Prophet [Joseph Smith], **had a Father**, and since there has been a condition of this kind through all eternity, **each Father had a Father**, until we come to

a stop where we cannot go further, because of our limited capacity to understand. [25 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, Bookcraft, 1955, p. 47.]

The plurality of Gods is taught in the Book of Abraham, one of the LDS scriptures:

And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, **that is the Gods**, organized and formed the heavens and the earth. [26 *Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Abraham 4:1.]

Contrary to the LDS teaching, the Bible affirms there is only one God:

*“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. **Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.** I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior.”* (Isaiah 43:10-11)

*“This is what the Lord says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: **I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.** . . . You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.”* (Isaiah 44:6, 8)

*“With whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? . . . **I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.**”* (Isaiah 46:5, 9)

5. God lives on a planet near the star Kolob.

In the Book of Abraham we read:

And I, Abraham, . . . saw the **stars**, that they were very great, and that one of them was **nearest unto the throne of God**; . . . the name of the great one is **Kolob**, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God: I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest. . . . **Kolob** is

after the reckoning of the Lord's time; which **Kolob** is set nigh unto the throne of God, to govern all those planets which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest. . . . therefore **Kolob** is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam that thou hast seen, because it is nearest unto me. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Abraham 3:1-16)

The Book of Abraham contains three illustrations, which were copied from some Egyptian papyri owned by the LDS Church. In Facsimile No. 2 one of the images was described as:

Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or the **residence of God**. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Abraham, Explanation of Facsimile No. 2, Fig. 1.)

However, the Bible describes God as filling the universe, and not restricted to one place:

"Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?" (Isaiah 66:1)

"Am I only a God nearby, " declares the Lord, "and not a God far away? Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?" declares the Lord. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:23-24)

6. All matter is eternal. God did not create out of nothing, but organized existing matter when he formed the universe.

In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read:

Just as God organized **preexisting matter** to create the universe, so he organized **preexisting intelligence** to create the spirits that eventually became human beings. Consequently, Latter-day Saints **do not** view God as the *total* cause of what human beings are. Human intelligence is **uncreated** by God, and therefore independent of his control. [27 Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, Macmillan Pub., 1992, p. 400.]

Parley P. Pratt, an apostle and close associate of Joseph Smith, wrote:

“Matter and spirit are of equal duration; both are **self-existent**, they never began to exist, and they never can be annihilated. . . . **Matter as well as spirit is eternal, uncreated, self existing.**” [28 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 869.]

In the *Doctrine and Covenants* we read:

The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy. (*Doctrine & Covenants* 93:33)

There is no such thing as immaterial matter. **All spirit is matter**, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; (*D&C* 131:7)

Preaching in 1844 Joseph Smith declared:

You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made **out of nothing**; and they will answer, “Doesn’t the Bible say He created the world?” And they infer, from the word **create**, that it must have been made out of nothing. Now, the word **create** came from the word *baurau* which does not mean to create out of nothing; **it means to organize**; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—**chaotic matter, which is element**, and in which dwells all the glory. **Element had an existence from the time he had**. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed: they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. **They had no beginning, and can have no end.** [29 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 350-352.]

However, in the Bible we read that God spoke everything into existence.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. (Psalm 33:6)

“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself.” (Isaiah 44:24)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

7. The Earth and every living thing was first created in heaven as a spirit entity prior to its mortal existence.

This teaching is based on one of Joseph Smith’s new scriptures, the Book of Moses:

And now, behold, I say unto you, that these are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, when they were created, . . . And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. **For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth.** [30 *Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Moses 3:4-5.]

In the 2010 LDS publication, *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, we read that “all things were first created in the spirit existence in heaven before they were placed upon this earth.” [31 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 16.] **The manual goes on to quote Apostle Bruce R. McConkie:**

“This earth was created first spiritually. It was a spirit earth. Nothing then lived on its face, nor was it designed that anything should. Then came the physical creation, the paradisiacal creation, the creation of the earth in the Edenic day and before the fall of man. . . .

“**Man and all forms of life existed as spirit beings and entities** before the foundations of this earth were laid. There were spirit men and spirit beasts, spirit fowls and spirit fishes, spirit plants and spirit trees. Every creeping thing, every herb and shrub, every amoeba and tadpole, every elephant and dinosaur—all things—existed as spirits, as spirit beings, before they were placed naturally upon the earth.” [32 *Ibid.*]

There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that every living thing was first created as a spirit entity in heaven before being placed on the earth.

8. There is a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father. They are often referred to as our Heavenly Parents.

The 2009 LDS manual, *Gospel Principles*, explains that we were all born in a pre-earth life to Heavenly Parents:

When we lived as spirit children with our **heavenly parents**, our Heavenly Father told us about His plan for us to become more like Him. [33 *Gospel Principles*, LDS Church, 2009, p. 23.]

In the 2010 LDS manual, *Doctrines of the Gospel*, there is a quote from the 1909 LDS First Presidency statement “The Origin of Man,” which reads:

“All men and women are in the similitude of the **universal Father and Mother**, and are **literally the sons and daughters of Deity**.” [34 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 14; also see *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 4, p. 1667.]

In a 1995 statement, the LDS First Presidency declared:

All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved **spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents**, and, as such, each has a **divine nature** and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose. [35 *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*, LDS Church Statement, 1995.]

Lorenzo Snow, fifth president of the LDS Church, stated:

We have a **mother in heaven**. We are the offspring of God. He is our Father, and **we have a Mother** in the other life as well. [36 Clyde J. Williams, ed., *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, Bookcraft, 1984, p. 191.]

This doctrine led to some Mormons praying to Heavenly Mother. However, Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley admonished the women of the church not to pray to her:

And now, speaking of prayer, I touch on another matter. Last April, I spoke to the regional representatives of the Church, as I have done for a number of years on each occasion when they have come for general conference. . . .

I am therefore on this occasion going to take the liberty of rereading that portion of the talk which pertains to a matter over which some few women of the Church appear to be greatly exercised. I give it to all, in this forum, because of the activities of a few who evidently are seeking to lead others in the paths which they are following. I speak of those who advocate **the offering of prayers to our Mother in Heaven**. I quote from that earlier address:

This [practice] began in private prayer and is beginning to spread to prayers offered in some of our meetings. . . . Logic and reason would certainly suggest that if we have a Father in Heaven, we have a Mother in Heaven. That doctrine rests well with me.

However, in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, **I regard it as inappropriate for anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven.** [37 Gordon B. Hinckley, “Daughters of God,” *Ensign* (Nov. 1991).]

Since the Bible declares that there is only one God there cannot be a female deity as well.

*“This is what the Lord says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: **I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.** . . . You are my witnesses. **Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.**” (Isaiah 44:6, 8)*

The only female deities in the Bible are pagan goddesses. In 1 Kings 18:19 Elijah challenges the gods Baal and Asherah:

Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table. (1 Kings 18:19)

Also, the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah rebuked those in Israel who were worshipping the “*Queen of Heaven,*” evidently referring to the pagan goddess Astarte (Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:15-18).

In the book of Acts we read of the great uproar between Paul and the followers of the goddess Artemis (referred to as Diana in the KJV):

*And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of **the great goddess Artemis** will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty. (Acts 19:26-27)*

But nowhere in the Bible do we read of a Christian female deity.

9. We were literally born as spirit beings to Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother in a pre-mortal state (referred to as our first estate) and were raised from infant spirits to full adults prior to our birth on the earth as mortals (our second estate).

Under the heading **GOD THE FATHER** in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read:

Latter-day Saints perceive the Father as an exalted Man in the **most literal, anthropomorphic terms**. . . .

The Father, Elohim, is called the Father because he is the **literal father** of the **spirits** of mortals (Heb. 12:9). This **paternity is not allegorical**. All individual human spirits were begotten (not created from nothing or made) by the Father in a premortal state, **where they lived and were nurtured by Heavenly Parents** [meaning God and his wife]. . . . [38 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, pp. 548-549.]

The doctrine of the **pre-existence**,—revealed so plainly, particularly in latter days, pours a wonderful flood of light upon the otherwise mysterious problem of man’s origin. It shows **that man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity** in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal body . . . [39 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, LDS Church, 1998, p. 335.]

In 2006 the LDS Church published an article “The Fulness of the Gospel: The Purpose of Life,” which examines some of its unique doctrines:

We cannot understand the purpose of this mortal life—why we are here—unless we first understand who we are, where we came from, and what our eternal destiny is. These truths, found in the scriptures and restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, teach us that we are **literal spirit children of God**, that we lived with Him in a premortal existence, and that **we have within us the seeds of godhood, the potential to become like Him**. [40 “The Fulness of the Gospel: The Purpose of Life,” *Ensign* (Aug. 2006): p. 64.]

Since Mormonism teaches that we were literally born to Heavenly Parents in a pre-mortal existence they interpret Bible verses referring to us as children of God in a very literal way. Joseph Smith taught that “the inhabitants [of the world] are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:24). Thus the LDS believe we were literally born to our Heavenly Parents in a prior existence, making us “begotten” children of God. However, according to the LDS, Jesus is the only one begotten in the flesh. Thus Jesus was twice “begotten” of God, first as a spirit child and then as God’s literal physical child.

However, the Bible speaks of God as our father in a figurative sense. In the New Testament we are told that we become children of God through spiritual adoption, not a literal birth in a prior life.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

*So in Christ Jesus you are all **children of God through faith.***
(Galatians 3:26)

In the Bible only Christ existed before mortality, not man. We did not exist in heaven prior to our earthly experience.

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58)

*Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**, and the man became a living being.* (Genesis 2:7)

***He [Christ] is before all things**, and in him all things hold together.* (Colossians 1:17)

*The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and **who forms the human spirit within a person**, declares: “I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling.”* (Zechariah 12:1-2)

According to the Bible Jesus is the only Son of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (John 1:18)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. (John 3:18)

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. (1 John 4:9)

Paul explained that we started life with a mortal body but after the resurrection we will have a spiritual body. However,

Mormonism is saying that we started out in heaven with a spiritual body, then came to earth to receive a mortal body and will later receive a resurrected body.

*So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown [buried] is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown **a natural body**, it is raised **a spiritual body**. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. . . . The spiritual did **not** come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. . . . And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.*
(1 Corinthians 15:42-49)

10. Jesus and Lucifer are literally brothers. They, along with millions of other spirit children, were born in heaven to our Heavenly Parents.

In 1986 Jess L. Christensen, an Area Authority Seventy of the LDS Church, wrote:

On first hearing, the doctrine that **Lucifer and our Lord, Jesus Christ, are brothers** may seem surprising to some—especially to those unacquainted with latter-day revelations. But both the scriptures and the prophets affirm that **Jesus Christ and Lucifer are indeed offspring of our Heavenly Father** and, therefore, **spirit brothers**. . . . But as the Firstborn of the Father, **Jesus was Lucifer’s older brother**. [41 Jess L. Christensen, “I Have A Question,” *Ensign* (June 1986): p. 25. (<http://www.lds.org/ensign/1986/06/i-have-a-question>)]

Speaking at the October 1969 LDS Conference, Sterling W. Sill explained how we are all related:

It is helpful for us to remember that **God, angels, spirits, and men are all of the same species** in different stages of development and in various degrees of righteousness. [42 Sterling W. Sill, *LDS Conference Reports* (October 1969): p. 18.]

Mormons believe that in the distant past all of the millions of spirit children were called to a grand council, where the two oldest sons of God, Jesus and Lucifer, argued over the plan for life on earth. LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe wrote:

In the grand council called to ratify the Father’s plan, a great difference arose. The majority, led by the **First Born of the Father, our Elder Brother, Jesus the Christ**, was ready to accept the plan with all its conditions. The minority, led by **Lucifer, a “son of the morning,”** feared the isolation and the pains and ills of earth. For them Lucifer proposed that they should be sent to earth, but that provisions should be made by which they would suffer no pain and would not have to make any sacrifices. All of them would be returned with earthly bodies irrespective of their works on earth. This latter plan seemed desirable that one-third of those present favored it, in direct opposition of God’s plan. **Lucifer and his followers were thrown out of the council, and as opponents of God’s plan, became the devil and his angels**, who strive ever to tempt men to disobey the laws of God. [43 John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, Bookcraft, 1991, pp. 156-157.]

Jesus was for free agency but Lucifer wanted to force humans to obey God’s commands. This resulted in a great war at which time God expelled from heaven Lucifer and those who followed him and they then became the devil and his agents on earth. Joseph Smith explained:

The contention in heaven was—Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the devil said he could save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council, who gave their vote in favor of Jesus Christ. So the devil rose up in rebellion against God, and was cast down, with all who put up their heads for him. [44 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 357.]

LDS President Harold B. Lee explained:

Satan commands a mighty force comprising **one-third of all God’s spirit children** who were cast out with him . . . [45 Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places*, Deseret Book, 1974, p. 329.]

According to Mormonism the Father, Son and Holy Ghost each achieved godhood. In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all resurrected and perfected mortals **become gods** . . . They will dwell again with GOD THE FATHER, and live and act like him in endless worlds of happiness, power, love, glory, and knowledge; above all, they will have the power of procreating endless lives. Latter-day Saints believe that **Jesus Christ attained godhood** . . . and that he marked the path and led the way for others likewise to become exalted divine beings by following him. [46 “Godhood,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 553.]

LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley admitted that the LDS view of Jesus was completely different from standard Christianity. In 1998 the *Deseret News* reported:

In bearing testimony of Jesus Christ, President Hinckley spoke of those outside the Church who say Latter-day Saints “do not believe in the traditional Christ. **No, I don’t.** The traditional Christ of whom they speak **is not the Christ of whom I speak.** For the Christ of whom I speak has been revealed in this the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.” [47 “Pres. Hinckley speaks to 6,600 in Paris, Geneva,” *Deseret News*, Church News (June 20, 1998): p. 7.]

There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that Lucifer and Jesus are brothers or that we are the same species as them. When Jesus said, “*You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world*” (John 8:23), he was declaring his eternal godhood. He is from heaven, we are mortals on earth. He is the creator, we are his creation.

Paul explained in Colossians 1:15-17 that Christ is the creator. As such he stands at the head of his creation. Paul’s use of “*first born*” is to be understood as figurative, and not referring to a literal birth as God’s child.

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For **in him all things were created:** things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or*

rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. **He is before all things**, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17)

Thus we see the distinction between Jesus and humans. He has always existed as God, we had a beginning as his creation. Paul explained that even though there are beings who have been designated “gods,” there is only one true God:

*So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that **“There is no God but one.”** For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), yet for us there is **but one God**, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (1 Corinthians 8:4-6)*

In the book of John we read:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.** He was with God in the beginning. **Through him all things were made;** without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. (John 1:1-4)*

Jesus’ eternal godhood is also laid out in the book of Hebrews:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

Also, angels are God’s creation, not his literal children.

You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you. (Nehemiah 9:6)

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts. . . . Let them praise the name of the Lord, for at his command they were created. (Psalm 148:2-5)

11. The Fall was necessary and a great blessing. According to the Book of Mormon, Adam and Eve could not have children prior to the Fall. God intended them to disobey in order to introduce mortality and eternal progression.

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. . . . **And they would have had no children** . . . Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:22-25)

And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for **because of my transgression** my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: **Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed**, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Moses 5:10-11)

In *Doctrines of the Gospel* we read:

If we correctly understand the role of Adam and Eve, we will realize that those who have labeled them sinners responsible for the universal depravity of the human family are misguided. The truth is that Adam and Eve opened the door for us to come into mortality, **a step essential to our eternal progress**. [48 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 19.]

In the 2009 edition of *Gospel Principles* we read:

Some people believe Adam and Eve committed a serious sin when they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. **However**, latter-day scriptures help us understand that their Fall was **a necessary step** in the plan of life and **a great blessing** to all of us. Because of the Fall, we are blessed with physical bodies, the right to choose between good and evil, and the opportunity to gain eternal life. [49 *Gospel Principles*, 2009, p. 29; see also “The Choice that Began Mortality,” *Ensign* (Jan. 2002). (www.lds.org/ensign/2002/01/the-choice-that-began-mortality)]

The Bible, on the other hand, describes the Fall as a great curse, not a blessing. God intended obedience. There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that Adam and Eve could not have children before the Fall.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28)

The LDS view would mean that God deliberately gave Adam and Eve a commandment they could not keep. They believe Adam and Eve could not have children until after the Fall, so there would have been no way for them to “increase in number” in obedience to God. Thus their disobedience is viewed as a positive act. LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe wrote:

“In Joseph Smith’s philosophy of existence Adam and Eve were raised to a foremost place among the children of men, second only to the Savior. Their act was to be acclaimed. They were the greatest figures of the ages. The so-called ‘fall’ became a necessary, honorable act in carrying out the plan of the Almighty.” [50 Widtsoe, Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, p. 160.]

However, the Bible says that when we choose sin we are following our sinful desires:

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. (James 1:13-14)

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned — . . . But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man [Adam], how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! (Romans 5:12, 15)

12. Heavenly Father, as a resurrected physical being, literally had intercourse with Mary to procreate Jesus as his son in the flesh. While this is not directly stated in current LDS manuals, it would be the logical conclusion after reading their doctrinal material.

The 2010 manual *Doctrines of the Gospel* quotes LDS Apostle James E. Talmage to establish that Jesus is literally the son of God the Eternal Father:

“That Child to be born of Mary was **begotten of Elohim**, the Eternal Father, **not in violation of natural law** but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and **the offspring from that association** of supreme sanctity, **celestial Sireship**, and pure though mortal maternity, was of right to be called the ‘Son of the Highest.’” [51 James E. Talmage, as quoted in *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 9.]

The manual goes on to quote President Heber J. Grant to emphasize the literalness of Jesus’ paternity:

“We believe absolutely that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, begotten of God, the first-born in the spirit and **the only begotten in the flesh**; that He is **the Son of God just as much as you and I are the sons of our fathers.**” [52 Heber J. Grant, as quoted in *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 9.]

Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth president of the LDS Church, wrote that Jesus’ mortal body was literally “sired” by God:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the **most literal sense**. The **body** in which He performed His mission in the flesh **was sired** by that same Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father. [53 *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, Bookcraft, 1988, p. 7.]

When BYU professor Stephen E. Robinson was asked about the Mormon view of Jesus’ literal paternity he responded:

**An Illustration and Discussion to Help
Further Answer Jenny's Question:**

At this point, discuss in your own words how Jesus was the only begotten Son of God. You might do this by using the following illustration on a chalkboard or piece of paper.

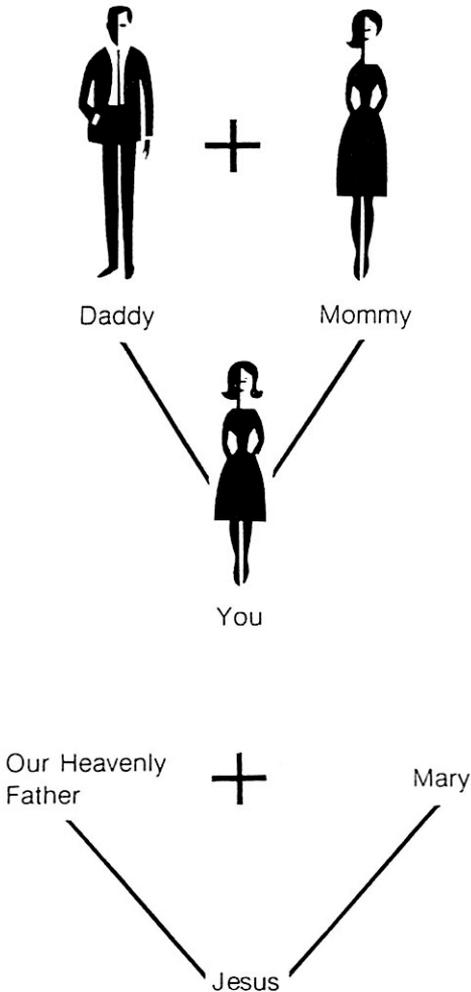


Illustration from p. 125 of the 1972 *Family Home Evening Manual*.

The official doctrine of the Church is that **Jesus is the literal offspring of God**. He's got 46 chromosomes, 23 came from Mary, **23 came from God the Eternal Father**. [54 Stephen E. Robinson, interview in *The Mormon Puzzle*, DVD, North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1997.]

Brigham Young preached:

The birth of the Saviour was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the **result of natural action**. He partook of flesh and blood—was **begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers**. [55 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, p. 268.]

The 1972 LDS Family Home Evening Manual quoted past LDS President Joseph F. Smith regarding the literal paternity of Jesus by Heavenly Father:

“You all know that your fathers are indeed your fathers and that your mothers are indeed your mothers—. . . Now, we are told in scriptures that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God **in the flesh**. Well, now for the benefit of the older ones, **how are children begotten? I answer just as Jesus Christ was begotten of his father. . . .**”

The manual continues:

An Illustration and Discussion to Help Further Answer Jenny's Question:

At this point, discuss in your own words how Jesus was the only begotten Son of God. You might do this by using the following illustration on a chalkboard or piece of paper.

All boys and girls have a mother and father on earth. Your mother and father, of course, are mother and I. Jesus is the only person ever born on this earth that is different. Jesus had a mother on earth. What was her name? (Mary.) **But who was his real father? (Heavenly Father.)** So you see, Jesus is the only person who had our Heavenly Father as **the father of his body**. [56 *Family Home Evening Manual*, LDS Church, 1972, pp. 125-126.]

The previous illustration from that manual shows that the conception of Jesus required both a father and a mother.

The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* explains Jesus' paternity in these words:

The fact of Jesus' being the **literal** Son of God in the **flesh** is crucial to the ATONEMENT, . . . For Latter-day Saints, **the paternity of Jesus is not obscure. He was the literal, biological son of an immortal, tangible Father** and Mary, a mortal woman (see VIRGIN BIRTH). Jesus is the only person born who deserves the title "the Only Begotten Son of God" . . . He was not the son of the HOLY GHOST; it was only through the Holy Ghost that the power of the Highest overshadowed Mary (Luke 1:35; 1 Ne. 11:19). [57 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 729.]

From these LDS quotes and their own illustration it is clear that they are teaching a literal union between God and Mary, the same as occurs when any earthly couple procreate children.

However, the Bible declares that Mary was a virgin and that her conception was a miracle.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:18)

Luke 1:26-35 has a similar account.

God sent the angel Gabriel . . . to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

" . . . You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. . . ."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

13. Jesus suffered in Gethsemane to atone for our sins.

The LDS Church claims that Jesus atoned for our sins mainly in Gethsemane, thus minimizing the importance of the cross. Partly due to the over-emphasis of Gethsemane, Mormons do not place crosses on their buildings or wear crosses. Speaking at the April 2004 LDS Conference, Apostle M. Russell Ballard stated:

There in the quiet isolation of the **Garden of Gethsemane**, He knelt among the gnarled olive trees, and in some incredible way that none of us can fully comprehend, **the Savior took upon Himself the sins of the world**. Even though His life was pure and free of sin, He paid the ultimate penalty for sin—yours, mine, and everyone who has ever lived. His mental, emotional, and spiritual anguish were so great they caused Him to bleed from every pore (see Luke 22:44; D&C 19:18). [58 M. Russell Ballard, “The Atonement and the Value of One Soul,” *Ensign* (May 2004): p. 84.]

In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, under the heading of GETHSEMANE, we read:

... For Latter-day Saints, **Gethsemane** was the scene of Jesus’ **greatest** agony, even **surpassing** that which he suffered on the cross, an understanding supported by Mark’s description of Jesus’ experience (Mark 14:33-39).

... The evidence for Jesus’ extreme agony in **Gethsemane** is buttressed by a prophecy in the Book of Mormon and a statement by the resurrected Savior recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. About 125 B.C., a Book of Mormon king, Benjamin, recounted in an important address a prophecy of the coming messiah spoken to him by an angel during the previous night. Concerning the Messiah’s mortal experience, the angel declared that “he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; **for behold, blood cometh from every pore**, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mosiah 3:7). The Doctrine and Covenants gives the following poignant words of the resurrected Jesus: “Behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; . . . which

suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and **to bleed at every pore**, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:16, 18).

Modern LDS leaders have emphasized that Jesus’ most challenging experience came in **Gethsemane**. Speaking in a general conference of the Church in 1982, Marion G. Romney, a member of the First Presidency, observed that Jesus suffered “the pains of all men, which he did, **principally, in Gethsemane**, the scene of his great agony” (*Ensign* 12 [May 1982]:6). [59 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 542.]

LDS President Ezra Taft Benson gave this description of the atonement:

It was in **Gethsemane** that Jesus took on Himself the sins of the world, in **Gethsemane** that His pain was equivalent to the cumulative burden of all men, in **Gethsemane** that He descended below all things so that all could repent and come to Him. [60 *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, Bookcraft, 1988, p. 15.]

However, the New Testament links Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross with the atonement, not his suffering in the garden of Gethsemane.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul stressed that Christ’s death was of primary importance in the atonement. In 1 Corinthians 15:3 he wrote, “For what I received I passed on to you . . . that Christ died for our sins . . .”

Throughout the New Testament it is the death of Christ that is stressed, not his suffering in Gethsemane.

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, **Christ died for us.** (Romans 5:8)*

*For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him **through the death of his Son**, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Romans 5:10)*

Hebrews 9:22 states that without the shedding (not sweating) of blood, there is no remission of sins. Other verses explain:

*May I never boast **except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)*

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:8)

14. The gospel includes all of Mormon doctrine.

The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* explains:

Although emphasis is placed on truths necessary for salvation, LDS usage of the term “gospel” is not confined to the scriptural definition. **Latter-day Saints commonly refer to the entire body of their religious beliefs as “the gospel.”** [61 “Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 558.]

At another place in the same article it equates acceptance of the gospel with acceptance of the LDS Church:

In all these scriptural passages, the **gospel** or DOCTRINE of Christ teaches that **salvation is available through his authorized [LDS] servants** to all who will (1) believe in Christ; (2) repent of their SINS; (3) be baptized in water [by LDS priesthood] as a witness of their willingness to take his name upon them and keep his COMMANDMENTS; (4) receive the Holy Ghost by the LAYING-ON OF HANDS [by LDS priesthood]; and (5) **endure to the end.** [62 *Ibid.*, p. 556.]

In the Book of Mormon we read:

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, **after all we can do.** (2 Nephi 25:23).

Spencer W. Kimball, twelfth President of the LDS Church, declared:

Ordinances are basic to the gospel. Now, what is the gospel of which we speak? It is the power of God unto salvation; **it is the code of laws and commandments which help us to become perfect,** and the ordinances which constitute the entrance requirements. [63 *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 502.]

Jorge F. Zeballor, of the LDS first quorum of the Seventy, wrote:

Salvation and eternal life would not be possible if it were not for the Atonement, brought about by our Savior, to whom we owe everything. But in order for these supreme blessings to be effective in our lives, **we should first do our part**, “for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.” [64 Jorge F. Zeballor, “Attempting the Impossible, *Ensign*, (October 2009).]

To illustrate the Mormon understanding of the atonement, LDS Apostle Boyd K. Packer tells a story of a man who gets deeply in debt. When the creditor (God) calls in the note, the man is unable to repay it. The debtor then turns to a friend (Christ) for help. The friend says to the creditor:

“I will pay the debt if you will free the debtor from his contract so that he may keep his possessions and not go to prison.” . . . And so the creditor agreed.

The mediator turned then to the debtor. **“If I pay your debt, will you accept me as your creditor?”**

“Oh yes, yes,” cried the debtor. “You save me from prison and show mercy to me.”

“Then,” said the benefactor, **“you will pay the debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible. I will provide a way.”** [65 *Gospel Principles*, 2009. pp. 64-65.]

According to this parable, it appears that Christ merely refinanced the man’s debt, it was not a gift. The man still had to pay off the debt, but at lower terms. However, Paul always placed the emphasis on Christ’s atonement, not on man’s efforts:

Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but

*trusts God who **justifies the ungodly**, their **faith** is credited as righteousness. (Romans 4:4-5)*

While the LDS Church preaches faith in Christ’s atonement, it is not enough without their church rites. The Bible, however, preaches a gospel of faith in Christ alone. Paul wrote that we are declared “righteous” solely on the basis of Christ’s atonement:

*This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to **all who believe**. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, and **all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus**. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to **be received by faith**. (Romans 3:22-25)*

Paul described the gospel, or “good news,” in these words:

*By **this gospel** you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve**. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)*

Paul also wrote:

*For I am not ashamed of **the gospel**, because it is the power of God that brings **salvation to everyone who believes**: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is **by faith** from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)*

In 1 Corinthians 11:4 Paul warned about those who would preach a different Jesus or a different gospel. This warning seems applicable to the LDS doctrines. The gospel is the good news that through Christ’s death and resurrection he has redeemed all those who place their faith in his sacrifice, not in their own efforts.

15. Going to heaven is not the same as having eternal life.

According to Mormonism, practically everyone will gain heaven. Salvation is equated with “resurrection” [immortality] and it is promised to virtually all, but the only ones who will experience “eternal life” [exaltation] are those who have been faithful LDS, married in the temple, and achieve the highest level of heaven. In 2006 Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., of the quorum of the Seventy, gave this explanation of the atonement:

Because of the Resurrection, all of us will have **immortality**. Because of the Atonement, those who have sufficient faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to take upon themselves His name, who repent and live in accordance with His gospel, who keep covenants with Him and His Father, and who participate in the saving ordinances made available in sacred ways and places will experience and enjoy **eternal life**. [66 Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., “What Does the Atonement Mean to You?” *Liahona*, (April 2009).]

Immortality is equated with “general salvation” or saved by grace. Eternal life, however, is exaltation in the highest level of heaven. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Unconditional or general salvation, that which comes by **grace alone** without obedience to gospel law, consists in the mere fact of **being resurrected**. In this sense salvation is synonymous with **immortality**; it is the inseparable connection of body and spirit so that the resurrected personage lives forever. . . .

But this is not the salvation of righteousness, the salvation which the saints seek. Those who gain only this general or unconditional salvation will still be judged according to their works and receive their places in **a terrestrial or a telestial kingdom**. They will, therefore, be damned; their eternal progression will be cut short; they will not fill the full measure of their creation, but in eternity will be ministering servants to more worthy persons.

Conditional or individual salvation, that which comes by **grace coupled with gospel obedience**, consists in receiving an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God. This kind of salvation

follows faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the Holy Ghost, and continued righteousness to the end of one's mortal probation. (D. & C. 20:29; 2 Ne. 9:23-24.) . . .

Even those in the celestial kingdom, however, who do not go on to exaltation, will have immortality only and not eternal life.

Along with those of the celestial and terrestrial worlds they will be "ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory." They will live "separately and singly" in an unmarried state "without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity." (D. & C. 132:16-17.) [67 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, pp. 668-670.]

The Bible, however, does not differentiate between going to heaven and eternal life. If you have one, you have the other. In the Bible we read of only two conditions: eternal life or eternal punishment.

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will **put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left**. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. . . ."*

*Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. . . . Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." Then they will go away to **eternal punishment**, but the **righteous to eternal life**. (Matthew 25:31-46)*

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them. (John 3:36)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in[a] Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

*God is just: . . . He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with **everlasting destruction** and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)*

16. Heaven is divided into three levels: telestial, terrestrial, and celestial.

Only faithful LDS achieve the top level of the celestial kingdom, and may then advance to godhood. Only those in the celestial kingdom are in the presence of Heavenly Father. The following extracts from the LDS scriptures explain their concept of three levels in heaven:

They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. . . . And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, **they are gods**, even the sons of God— . . . These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever. . . . These are they whose bodies are **celestial** whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical.

And again, we saw the **terrestrial** world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament. Behold, these are they who died without law; . . . Wherefore, they are **bodies terrestrial, and not bodies celestial**, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun. . . .

And again, we saw the glory of the **telestial** which glory is that of the lesser, even as the glory of the stars differs from that of the glory of the moon in the firmament. These are they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus. (*D&C 76:54-81*)

Here we see Joseph Smith rewording 1 Corinthians 15:40-41 to give support to his teaching that there are different levels of heaven. The King James Version refers to “*celestial bodies*” and “*terrestrial bodies*.” However “celestial” simply means *heavenly* and “terrestrial” means *earthly*.

There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor; the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. (1 Corinthians 15:40-41)

The whole context of 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection of the dead. At this point in the chapter, Paul is answering the question about what resurrected bodies will be like (verse 35). So he explains that our heavenly bodies will be quite different from our earthly bodies. The body we will receive at the time of the resurrection will be so much more glorious than the one we have now that it is like the splendor of the sun compared to the splendor of the moon or stars. Simply read verses 42-44 and you will see the contrast between mortal bodies and resurrected bodies. There is nothing in the context which speaks of different levels of heaven.

Marvin Cowan gave this overview of 1 Corinthians 15:

Celestial and terrestrial bodies are mentioned in v. 40, but any dictionary will show that celestial means “heavenly” and terrestrial means “earthly.” The word “telestial” is not found in I Cor. 15 because it was a concept of Joseph Smith’s and can only be found in Mormon teachings. The glory of the sun, moon, and stars in v. 41 is used by LDS to support their concept of three heavens, but the context refers to “bodies,” not heavens! If this verse is about different “heavens,” then there must be innumerable “glories” or heavens, for it goes on to say that “one star differeth from another star in glory.” Furthermore, many stars are actually bigger and brighter than our sun, so if the LDS analogy is followed, the telestial heaven (represented by stars) could be better than the celestial glory (represented by the sun)! In verse 39, Paul mentions four kinds of flesh. Does this verse teach that there are four heavens? That reasoning is just as valid as what the LDS do with verses 40-41. [68 Marvin Cowan, *Mormon Claims Answered*, Utah Christian Publications, 1997, pp. 115-116.]

When trying to bolster the concept of three levels of heaven Mormons will often appeal to Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 12:2: "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven." However, this is just an allusion to the idea that the first "heaven" is the atmosphere (Deut. 11:17; Acts 14:17), the second "heaven" would be outer-space (Psalm 19:4,6; Isaiah 13:10), and the third, or highest, "heaven" would be the dwelling place of God (Deut. 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27,30; Matt. 5:16).

Also, the Bible declares that all of the redeemed will be in God's presence:

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." (Revelation 21:1-3)

17. Man has the ability to become a God and rule over his own world, just as Heavenly Father did.

On the LDS Church newsroom website are answers to typical questions. One of the questions is "Do Latter-day Saints believe that they will 'get their own planet'?" Below is their answer:

No. This idea is not taught in Latter-day Saint scripture, nor is it a doctrine of the Church. This misunderstanding stems from speculative comments unreflective of scriptural doctrine. Mormons believe that we are all sons and daughters of God and that all of us have the potential to grow during and after this life to **become like our Heavenly Father** (see Romans 8:16-17). [69 <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/mormonism-101#C14>]

The first sentence seems to contradict the last statement. When considering what is LDS "doctrine" we have applied the dictionary definition: "something that is taught; teachings

collectively: *religious doctrine*.” Since the concept that man may advance to godhood was taught by Joseph Smith and repeated in the Doctrine and Covenants and current LDS teaching manuals, one must conclude that it is a “doctrine.”

For instance, Joseph Smith taught: “*Gods* have an ascendancy over the angels, who are ministering servants. In the resurrection, some are raised to be angels, others are raised to *become Gods*.”

[70 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 312.]

Also, the 2007 manual *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* quotes one of Smith’s sermons on the nature of God and man:

Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and **you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves**, and to be kings and priests to God, . . . What is it? **To inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a god, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before.** [71 *Teachings of Presidents: Joseph Smith*, pp. 221-222.]

As for their scriptures, *Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-22* does teach that man has the potential to become a god who will procreate eternally:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, . . . they shall pass by the angels, and **the gods**, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and **a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.**

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. **Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.** Verily, verily, I say unto you, **except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.** For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto **the exaltation and continuation of the lives**, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me. (*D&C 132:19-22*)

Notice how Joseph Smith has changed the meaning of Matthew 7:14, moving it from dealing with an individual's eternal life to meaning godhood and eternal procreation:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. [Matthew 7:14 KJV]

In the 2005 LDS teachers' manual for high school students, President Spencer W. Kimball is quoted as saying:

“Each one of you has it within the realm of his possibility to develop a kingdom over which you will preside as its king and god. You will need to develop yourself and grow in ability and power and worthiness, to **govern such a world** with all of its people. You are sent to this earth not merely to have a good time or to satisfy urges or passions or desires. . . . You are sent to this world with a very serious purpose. You are sent to school, . . . to begin as a human infant and grow to unbelievable proportions in wisdom, judgment, knowledge, and power.” [72. *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Seminary Teacher Resource Manual*, LDS Church, 2005, p. 220]

Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the LDS Church gave the following explanation of man's journey to godhood:

The Father has promised us that through our faithfulness we shall be blessed with the fulness of his kingdom. In other words we will have the privilege of becoming like him. **To become like him we must have all the powers of godhood; thus a man and his wife when glorified will have spirit children who eventually will go on an earth like this one we are on and pass through the same kind of experiences,** being subject to mortal conditions, and if faithful, then they also will receive the **fulness of exaltation** and partake of the **same blessings.** There is no end to this development; it will go on forever. **We will become gods and have jurisdiction over worlds, and these worlds will be peopled by our own offspring.** We will have an endless eternity for this. [73 *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, p. 48.]

Notice the specific teaching that every man who achieves godhood will rule over an earth populated by his own posterity. Evidence that the LDS Church is not moving away from this

teaching is the 2012 publication *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*:

... President Snow later recalled, “the Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me--the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, **the pathway of God and man**. I formed the following couplet which expresses **the revelation**, as it was shown me. . . . ‘**As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be.**’” [74 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*, LDS Church, 2012, p. 83.]

Further in the same manual Snow is quoted as saying:

Our travel in this path of **exaltation** will bring to us the fullness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to stand in the presence of our Father, **to receive of His fullness**, to have the pleasure of **increasing in our posterity worlds without end**, . . .

Through a continual course of progression our Heavenly Father has received exaltation and glory and he points us out the same path and, inasmuch as he is clothed with power, authority and glory, he says, “walk ye up and come in possession of the **same glory** and happiness that I possess.” [75 *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.]

The 2011 LDS manual *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith*, states:

Eternal life is to us the sum of pre-existence, present existence, and the continuation of life in immortality, holding out to us the power of **endless progression and increase**. With that feeling and that assurance, we believe that “**As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become**. [See Lorenzo Snow, “The Grand Destiny of Man,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 20, 1901, 22.] Being created in the image of God, we believe that it is not improper, that it is not unrighteous, for us to hope that we may be permitted to partake of the attributes of deity and, if we are faithful, to become **like unto God**; . . . [76 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith*, LDS Church, 2011, p. 71.]

The 2004 manual *Presidents of the Church Student Manual* gives further background on Snow’s couplet:

“I [Lorenzo Snow] formed the following couplet which expresses the revelation, as it was shown to me . . . :

*As man now is, God once was:
As God now is, man may be.*

“I felt this to be a sacred communication which I related to no one except my sister Eliza, . . .”

Soon after his return from England, in January, 1843, Lorenzo Snow related to the Prophet Joseph Smith his experience in Elder Sherwood’s home. This was in a confidential interview in Nauvoo. The Prophet’s reply was: “**Brother Snow, that is true gospel doctrine, and it is a revelation from God to you.**” [77 *Presidents of the Church Student Manual*, Religion 345, p. 88.]

In the 1997 edition of the LDS manual, *Gospel Principles*, the Mormon is taught that when he becomes exalted to godhood he will rule over his own planet the same as Heavenly Father now rules over our world. This would include his spirit children praying to him as their Heavenly Father.

BLESSINGS OF EXALTATION . . . These are some of the blessings given to exalted people:

1. They will live eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see *D&C 76*).
2. **They will become gods.**
3. They will have their righteous family members with them and will be able to have spirit children also. These **spirit children will have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father.** They will be an eternal family. [78 *Gospel Principles*, LDS Church, 1997, p. 302.]

In the 2010 LDS manual *Doctrines of the Gospel*, President Spencer W. Kimball is quoted as saying:

“**Each one of you has it within the realm of his possibility to develop a kingdom over which you will preside as its king and god.** You will need to develop yourself and grow in ability and power and worthiness, **to govern such a world with all of its people.** You are sent to this earth not merely to have a good time or to satisfy urges or passions or desires. . . . You are sent to this world

with a very serious purpose. You are sent to school, . . . to begin as a human infant and grow to unbelievable proportions in wisdom, judgment, knowledge, and power.” [79 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 29.]

The same teaching appears in the 2000 LDS booklet, *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women*:

The Blessings of Eternal Marriage

President Lorenzo Snow taught: “When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that **they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring**, worlds without end. And what offspring they do not have here, undoubtedly there will be opportunities to have them hereafter. What else could man wish? A man and a woman, in the other life, **having celestial bodies**, free from sickness and disease, glorified and beautified beyond description, standing in the midst of their posterity, governing and controlling them, **administering life, exaltation and glory** worlds without end” [80 Lesson 10, *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women*, Part A, LDS Church, 2000. (<http://tinyurl.com/8n8bmhx>)]

While addressing an assembly of young LDS missionaries in 2009, Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland stated:

We are charged with the responsibility of getting people out of their ruts and routines, out of their problems and their pain, out of their earthly little arguments and ignorance and sins, and **take them to the Gods**—to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost—ultimately we are to take them toward **their own Godhood**. [81 Shaun Stahle, “Divine Companion: Teaching by the Spirit,” *Deseret News*, Church News (July 4, 2009). (<http://tinyurl.com/9uc829j>)]

The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, containing various articles by BYU professors, explains man’s goal of Godhood:

GODHOOD

Logically and naturally, the ultimate desire of a loving Supreme Being is to help his children enjoy all that he enjoys. **For Latter-day Saints, the term “godhood” denotes the attainment of such a state—one of having all divine attributes and doing**

as God does and being as God is. Such a state is to be enjoyed by all exalted, embodied, intelligent beings (see Deification; Eternal Progression; Exaltation; God; Perfection). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all resurrected and perfected mortals **become gods** (cf. Gen. 3:22; Matt. 5:48). They will dwell again with God the Father, and **live and act like him in endless worlds** of happiness, power, love, glory, and knowledge; above all, they will have the power of procreating endless lives. Latter-day Saints believe that **Jesus Christ attained godhood** (see Christology) and that he marked the path and led the way for others likewise to **become exalted divine beings** by following him (cf. John 14:3). [82 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 553.]

Further on in the same article we read of God’s progression to godhood:

Latter-day Saints believe that God achieved his exalted rank by progressing much as man must progress and that God is a perfected and exalted man: “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. . . .” [83 *Ibid.*, p. 554.]

Clearly, the LDS Church is currently teaching that man’s goal is to achieve godhood so that he may eventually populate a world and care for his own progeny the same as Heavenly Father did.

ONE GOD OF THE BIBLE

Mormonism affirms that God and man are the same species with the same potential. However, the Bible consistently affirms that there is only one God, who has always existed as God:

Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be one after me. (Isaiah 43:10)

Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44:8)

. . . I will not give my glory unto another. Harken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. (Isaiah 48:11-12)

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. (Numbers 23:19)

For I am the Lord, I change not. (Malachi 3:6)

18. A man and woman must be married [sealed] in an LDS temple in order to have eternal life. Single people cannot achieve eternal life.

According to the LDS Church, eternal life is synonymous with exaltation or godhood. In one of Joseph Smith’s revelations we read:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man **marry a wife** by my word, which is my law, and by the **new and everlasting covenant**, and it is **sealed** unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, . . . Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and . . . inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . —then shall it be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, . . . and they shall pass by the angels, and **the gods**, which are set there, to **their exaltation** and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and **a continuation of the seeds forever** and ever.

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they **be gods**, because they have **all power**, and the angels are subject unto them. (*Doctrine & Covenants* 132:19-20)

In the 2000 LDS manual *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders*, it states:

Eternal marriage is a basic doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ and a very important part of the Lord’s plan for us. Without it we cannot be **exalted** in the **celestial kingdom** in eternity. . . . President Spencer W. Kimball said: “Our Heavenly Father has a plan for man’s growth from infancy to **godhood**.” [84 *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders*, Part A, 2000, p. 256.]

LDS temple marriage becomes the gateway for the man to become a Heavenly Father and for the woman to become a Heavenly Mother. LDS President Lorenzo Snow taught:

Women can become like our mother in heaven. You sisters, I suppose, have read that poem which my sister [Eliza R. Snow] composed years ago, and which is sung quite frequently now in our meetings. It tells us that we not only have a **Father** in “that high and glorious place,” but that we have a **Mother** too; and **you will become as great as your Mother**, if you are faithful. [85 *Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, Bookcraft 1984, pp. 7-8.]

There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that men may become gods, marriage is essential for eternal life, that it will continue past the grave, or that exalted couples will have children in heaven.

*Jesus replied, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead **will neither marry nor be given in marriage**, and they can no longer die; for they are **like the angels**. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection. (Luke 20:34-36)*

Paul, in the New Testament, advised staying single. Obviously he was not teaching the LDS doctrine that marriage is essential for eternal life.

*I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: **It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do.** (1 Corinthians 7:7-8)*

Faith in Christ’s atonement is the basis of eternal life, not an LDS temple marriage.

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have **eternal life**. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)*

19. In order to attend the temple Mormons must be current on their tithing to the LDS Church.

In the April 2011 LDS Conference, President Thomas Monson admonished the members to be faithful in paying their tithing so that they may attend the temple:

If you have not yet been to the temple or if you *have* been but currently do not qualify for a recommend, there is no more important goal for you to work toward than being **worthy to go to the temple**. Your sacrifice may be bringing your life into compliance with what is required to receive a recommend, perhaps by forsaking long-held habits which disqualify you. It may be having the faith and the discipline to **pay your tithing**. Whatever it is, **qualify to enter the temple of God**. Secure a temple recommend and regard it as a precious possession, for such it is. [86 Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple-A Beacon to the World,” LDS Conference, (April 2011).]

Tithing is of such importance in attaining acceptance by God that once a year members are requested to meet with their bishop for “tithing settlement.” In this meeting the lay pastor asks if they are current on their tithing. If not they are given the opportunity to bring it current. In 2011 Apostle Henry B. Eyring wrote:

Tithing settlement is months in the future [in December]. I pray that you and your family will begin now to plan and **prepare to qualify** for the blessings that God pours out on all those who can declare to Him that they are **full-tithe payers**. [87 Henry B. Eyring, “The Blessings of Tithing,” *Liahona* (June 2011).]

Below are the type of questions the bishop will ask a person in order to determine his/her worthiness to attend the temple:

1. Do you have faith in and a testimony of God the Eternal Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost?
2. Do you have a testimony of the Atonement of Christ and of His role as Savior and Redeemer?
3. Do you have a testimony of the restoration of the gospel in these the latter days?

4. Do you sustain the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator and as the only person on the earth who possesses and is authorized to exercise all priesthood keys? Do you sustain members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators? Do you sustain the other General Authorities and local authorities of the Church?
 5. Do you live the law of chastity?
 6. Is there anything in your conduct relating to members of your family that is not in harmony with the teachings of the Church?
 7. Do you support, affiliate with, or agree with any group or individual whose teachings or practices are contrary to or oppose those accepted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?
 8. Do you strive to keep the covenants you have made, to attend your sacrament and other meetings, and to keep your life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel?
 9. Are you honest in your dealings with your fellowmen?
 - 10. Are you a full-tithe payer?**
 11. Do you keep the Word of Wisdom?
 12. Do you have financial or other obligations to a former spouse or children? If yes, are you current in meeting those obligations?
 13. If you have previously received your temple endowment: Do you keep the covenants that you made in the temple? Do you wear the garment both night and day as instructed in the endowment and in accordance with the covenant you made in the temple?
 14. Have there been any sins or misdeeds in your life that should have been resolved with priesthood authorities but have not been?
 15. Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord's house and participate in temple ordinances?
- (www.lds-mormon.com/new_temple_questions.shtml)

Tithing was instituted in the Old Testament, and used for the support of the priests and the poor, but in the New Testament believers were to give as God leads. The New Testament does not make tithing a requirement for eternal life. Each believer was to give as his conscience led.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

20. Abstinence from tea, coffee, tobacco, alcohol and recreational drugs is required in order to enter the LDS temple.

In 1833 Joseph Smith dictated section 89 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, referred to as the Word of Wisdom, which outlined the LDS health code. It advises the members to abstain from wine (unless for the sacrament and of their own make), “strong drink” (liquor), tobacco and “hot drinks” (defined as coffee and tea). It advises the members to eat meat sparingly, but this is not emphasized. It also instructs the members to eat “Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof.” Yet Mormons are known for canning their fruit for future consumption.

Word of Wisdom: *Doctrine and Covenants* 89:4-21

4 Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation—

5 That inasmuch as any man drinketh **wine or strong drink** among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him.

6 And, behold, this should be wine, yea, **pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make.**

7 And, again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.

8 And again, **tobacco** is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill.

9 And again, **hot drinks** are not for the body or belly.

10 And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—

11 **Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof**; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving.

12 Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord,

have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless **they are to be used sparingly**;

13 And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, **only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.**

14 All grain is ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth;

15 And these hath God made for the use of man only in **times of famine and excess of hunger.**

16 All grain is good for the food of man; as also the fruit of the vine; that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground—

17 Nevertheless, wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks, as also other grain.

18 And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

19 And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

20 And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

21 And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen.

However, Jesus taught “What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them” (Matthew 15:11).

Paul instructed Christians not to judge on the basis of food or drink:

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17)

While Paul advised Christians not to drink to excess (Ephesians 5:17-19) he counseled Timothy to “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23).

21. Non-member parents, and LDS members who do not have a current temple recommend, are not allowed to attend their son or daughter's temple marriage ceremony.

Attendance at an LDS temple marriage is restricted to LDS members in good standing, who keep the Word of Wisdom (no tea, coffee, cigarettes or liquor), regularly attend their meetings and are current on their tithing. LDS Apostle Boyd K. Packer wrote that men and women can only attend the temple if they are fully active, tithe-paying members of the LDS Church:

We do not discuss the temple ordinances outside the temples. . . . All who are **worthy and qualify in every way** may enter the temple, there to be introduced to the sacred rites and ordinances. . . . You must possess a **current recommend to be admitted to the temple**. This recommend must be signed by the proper officers of the Church. . . .

The interview for a temple recommend is conducted privately between the bishop and the Church member concerned. Here the member is asked searching questions about personal conduct and worthiness and **loyalty to the Church** and its officers. The person must certify that he or she is morally clean and is keeping the Word of Wisdom, **paying a full tithe**, living in harmony with the teachings of the Church, and not maintaining any affiliation or sympathy with apostate groups. [88 Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *The Liahona* (October 2010).]

The pain experienced by non-Mormon family members who are not allowed to attend the temple weddings of their LDS family, was discussed in the February 2005 *Ensign*:

Question—Several of my family members are not LDS, and they feel hurt because they cannot attend my temple wedding. What can I do to help them understand and to ease hurt feelings?

[Answer]—A temple wedding can easily arouse parents' fears of losing their child to a marriage and a church they don't understand. . . . To the extent possible, provide some ideas about the sealing ceremony. Someone expecting a ceremony in a large cathedral

or hall may be quite surprised to learn that only a few people are typically present for a sealing [wedding] ceremony. [89 “Questions and Answers,” *Ensign* (Feb. 2005): p. 32.]

LDS Apostle Boyd K. Packer suggested that on the day of the wedding someone should stay outside the temple with the non-LDS family members to keep them company. “The disappointment and even resentment, sometimes bitterness, on the part of the nonmember parents or ineligible-member parents can be greatly softened in these ways.” [90 Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple*, LDS Church, 1982, p. 11.]

However, marriages in the Bible were public affairs and never performed in the Jewish temple.

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2:1-2)

22. Those who participate in the LDS temple endowment ceremony covenant to wear the LDS authorized undergarments the rest of their lives.

The woman wears a special camisole top with short sleeves along with bloomers that come almost to the knee. The man wears a specially designed tee shirt and briefs that extend almost to the knee. On the left and right breast area of both the men’s and women’s top are small zig-zag stitching representing the builder’s compass and square from Freemasonry. These would look like a small letter “L” and “V.” LDS Apostle Boyd Packer explains the importance of wearing the LDS temple undergarment:

Members who have received their **temple ordinances** thereafter wear the **special garment or underclothing**. Garments are provided by an agency of the Church—and are generally available to members [for a small fee] throughout the world through a distribution program operated by the Church.

The garment represents sacred covenants [taken in the temple].

It fosters modesty and becomes a shield and protection to the wearer. [91 Packer, *The Holy Temple*, pp. 17-18.]

Ezra Taft Benson, thirteenth president of the LDS Church, gave the following admonition:

If we keep the commandments, we will pay our tithes and offerings, our fast offerings, and our welfare contributions. . . . We will not violate the sacred covenants we have taken upon ourselves in the waters of baptism and in the temples of the Lord, **nor will we desecrate or cast to one side the garments of the holy priesthood.** We will attend to our temple work. [92 *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 357.]

In the Bible the Jewish priests had special attire, but it is silent about any special clothing for Christians. They are to be figuratively clothed in God's righteousness.

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness . . . (Isaiah 61:10)

Paul instructed the Christian women to wear modest apparel but does not mention any type of religious clothing.

I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. (1 Timothy 2:9-10)

23. In the LDS temple members are taught certain handshakes [tokens], gestures [signs] and passwords [key words] necessary to enter the celestial kingdom.

Preaching in 1853 Brigham Young gave the following explanation of the temple ritual:

Your **endowment** is, to receive all those **ordinances** in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have

departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, **being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood**, and gain your **eternal exaltation** in spite of earth and hell. [93 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 31.]

While the Mormon temple ritual has never been published by the LDS Church, it has been recorded by participants on different occasions. The following is taken from a transcript of one recording. This is the portion where a member is instructed on one of the temple handshakes and signs:

The **First Token** of the Aaronic Priesthood is given by clasping the right hands [of the temple patron and the temple administrator] and placing the joint of the thumb directly over the first knuckle of the hand, . . . Each of you make the **Sign of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood**, by bringing your right arm to the square, the palm of the hand to the front, the fingers close together, and the thumb extended. This is the **sign**. Now, repeat in your mind after me the **words** of the covenant. [94 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, p. 14.]

Later on the member is instructed on another handshake:

We will now give unto you the **Second Token** of the Aaronic Priesthood with its accompanying **name and sign**. This **token** is given by **clasping the right hands** and placing the joint of the thumb between the first and second knuckles of the hand, . . . [95 Tanner, *Evolution of Mormon Temple Ceremony*, p. 20; see also pp. 23 and 25.]

Since the Bible states that God knows our every thought there would be no need to know certain handshakes and passwords to prove one's worthiness to God. The psalmist declared that God knows our inner most thoughts.

*You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain. (Psalm 139:1-6)*

The Bible teaches that eternal life is granted to those who place their faith in Christ, not on a secret ritual.

*“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and **believes in him shall have eternal life**, and I will raise them up at the last day.” (John 6:40)*

24. In the temple Mormons swear an oath to consecrate everything, including all of their time, talents and money to the advancement of the LDS Church. Here is the oath of Consecration:

Each of you bring your right arm to the square.
You and each of you covenant and promise before God, angels, and these witnesses at this altar, that you do accept the **law of consecration** as contained in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, in that you do consecrate yourselves, your time, talents, and **everything with which the Lord has blessed you, or with which he may bless you, to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**, for the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth and for the establishment of Zion.

Each of you bow your head and say, “Yes.” [96 Tanner, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony*, p. 133.]

In the 2001 LDS publication *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* we read:

The Law of Consecration and Stewardship . . . Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

“I shall now set forth some of the principles of sacrifice and consecration to which the true saints **must** conform if

they are ever to go where God and Christ are and have an inheritance with the faithful saints of ages past. . . . The **law of sacrifice** is a celestial law; so is the **law of consecration**.

...
“Sacrifice and consecration are inseparably intertwined. The **law of consecration** is that we consecrate **our time, our talents, and our money and property to the cause of the Church**; such are to be available to the extent they are needed to further the Lord’s interests on earth.

“**The law of sacrifice** is that we are willing to sacrifice **all that we have** for the truth’s sake—our character and reputation; our honor and applause; our good name among men; **our houses, lands,** and families; all things, even our very lives if need be.” [97 *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, p. 422.]

While the Bible certainly encourages acts of charity and financial support for the work of God, it is never presented as a requirement for eternal life. In 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, we read about the collection that was gathered from various Christian communities to aid the poor in Israel. But such giving was never mandatory. In verse eleven Paul told them to give “according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.” As it says in Ephesians 2:8-9:

*For it is by **grace** you have been saved, **through faith**—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **not by works, so that no one can boast.***

25. In the LDS temple a woman is given a new name by which her husband will call her up from the grave at the time of the resurrection to be his eternal companion. The temple ritual demonstrates that both the husband and wife, who remain faithful Mormons until death, will be worthy of exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

LDS Apostle Charles W. Penrose explained:

In the divine economy, as in nature, the man “is the head of the woman,” and it is written that “he is the savior of the body.” But “the man is not without the woman” any more than the woman is without the man, in the Lord. Adam was first formed, then Eve. In the **resurrection**, they stand side by side and hold dominion together. **Every man** who overcomes all things and is thereby entitled to inherit all things, **receives power to bring up his wife** to join him in the possession and enjoyment thereof. [98 Charles W. Penrose, “Mormon” *Doctrine Plain and Simple, or Leaves from the Tree of Life*, LDS Church, Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888, p. 51.]

Preaching in 1857, LDS Apostle Erastus Snow explained that the ritual in the temple represents the time when a woman will be called from the grave by her husband:

Do the women, when they pray, remember their husbands? . . . Do you uphold your husband before God as your lord? “What!—my husband to be my lord?” I ask, **Can you get into the celestial kingdom without him?** Have any of you been there? You will remember that you never got into the celestial kingdom [during the temple ceremony] **without the aid of your husband**. If you did, it was because your husband was away, and some one had to act proxy for him. **No woman will get into the celestial kingdom, except her husband receives her**, if she is worthy to have a husband; and if not, somebody will receive her as a servant. [99 Erastus Snow, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5 (Oct. 4, 1857), p. 291.]

Both the husband and wife will receive a new name in the temple which will be their names through eternity, usually a Bible or Book of Mormon name. The Introduction to *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* discusses the meaning of the endowment ceremony and the wife’s new name:

Clayton described the temple endowment, a ritualized drama of the creation, fall, and redemption of Adam, during which its participants promise obedience and loyalty to the church, and repeat passwords and signs they believe will enable them to enter into the celestial or highest kingdom of heaven. He wrote about washings and anointings, preparatory rituals for the endowment ceremony,

and described dramatic role-playing in which church members act out the Garden of Eden story of Adam, Eve, and the serpent.

As church members rehearsed this celestial drama, they wore special clothing and volunteered the necessary words and signs to enter the highest heaven, the Celestial Kingdom. Clayton recorded that “The tokens and covenants are . . . the key by which you approach God and be recognized.” In this ceremony, each husband escorted his wife through a veil, calling her by a “new temple name.” The woman’s salvation would depend upon her husband’s priesthood authority. Clayton reported Brigham Young saying that “the man must love his God and the woman must love her husband,” adding that “woman will never get back, unless she follows the man back.” [100 George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, Signature Books, 1995, Introduction, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii; also pp. 204-240.]

This is not to say that Mormons believe that the husband determines whether or not a woman will be resurrected or which level of Mormon heaven she will inherit. Only a worthy LDS priesthood holder would be able to call his worthy wife up from the grave to be his eternal mate in the celestial kingdom. BYU professor W. John Walsh gave the following explanation:

First, Latter-day Saints do not believe that husbands have the ability to decide whether or not their wives will be 1) resurrected, or 2) enter the celestial kingdom. . . . Now, Latter-day Saints do believe that in some instances, a woman’s husband will be given the privilege of performing the resurrection ordinance for and in behalf of the Savior. In cases where a woman does not have a worthy husband, the Savior may allow her father to do so. . . .

2) Can a man refuse to call forth a worthy wife? Any man who would refuse to resurrect his wife at the Savior’s request would prove that he himself is unworthy of living in the celestial kingdom and the Savior would never ask such a person to perform the task in the first place. [101 W. John Walsh, “Do Husbands Resurrect Their Wives?” retrieved from www.mormons.org on June 13, 2012.]

However, the Bible never mentions the need for a temple marriage (sealing) or that the worthy husband will be given authority to resurrect his worthy wife. The Bible describes the resurrection as follows:

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

26. Sex is an eternal privilege granted to those couples who attain exaltation (godhood) in order for them to procreate all the spirit children needed to populate their own world.

In his book, *Rational Theology*, LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe explained that intercourse will continue among couples who inherit the celestial kingdom:

Sex Among the Gods. Sex, which is indispensable on this earth for the perpetuation of the human race, is an **eternal quality** which has its equivalent everywhere. It is indestructible. The relationship between men and women is eternal and must continue eternally. [p. 69]

Eternity of Sex. It has already been said that **sex is an eternal principle**. . . . Since sex, then, represents an eternal condition, the **begetting of children** is coincidentally an eternal necessity. [p. 155]

Celestial Marriage. If sex is eternal, it follows of necessity that the marriage covenant may also be eternal. . . . one of the chief duties of men and women will be to **beget spiritual children**. These spirits, in turn, in the process of time, will come down upon an "earth," . . . It is a reward of intelligent development, that we may become to other spiritual beings, what our God has been to us. [p. 157] [102 John A. Widtsoe, *Rational Theology*, Deseret Book, 1965, pp. 69, 155, 157.]

Widtsoe's comments are in agreement with these verses in the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

... if a man marry a wife by my word, . . . and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . they shall pass by the angels, and the gods which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a **continuation of the seeds forever** and ever. **Then shall they be gods**, . . . This is **eternal lives** . . . (*D&C* 132:19, 20, 24)

The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* gives the following explanation of the phrase “eternal lives” as quoted in *D&C* 132:24:

“**Eternal lives**” is a term that refers to the right and power to **beget children after the resurrection**, granted to those who are exalted in the highest degree of the CELESTIAL KINGDOM. This is an aspect of ETERNAL PROGRESSION. [103 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 465.]

The Bible, however, does not promise the believer godhood, an eternal marriage or the ability to procreate in heaven. When the Sadducees asked Jesus about a woman who had been married to seven men they wanted to know which one would be her husband in heaven. Jesus answered:

“You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”
(Matthew 22:29-30)

27. Polygamy will be lived in the celestial kingdom, the highest level of the LDS Heaven.

While the LDS Church does not advocate practicing plural marriage today, they do believe it will be practiced in heaven. In support of this it is known that an LDS widower is allowed to be sealed in the temple to another woman after the first wife dies, thus guaranteeing they will live plural marriage in the celestial kingdom.

In 1843 Joseph Smith gave a revelation on eternal marriage and polygamy, which is still published in their scriptures:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, **justified** my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching **the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines**—Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. (*D&C 132:1-2*)

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse **another**, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the **second**, and they are virgins, . . . then is he justified; . . . And if he have **ten virgins** given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for **they belong to him**, . . . (*D&C 132:61-62*)

Brigham Young, the second president and prophet of the LDS Church, explained why God introduced polygamy. All of the millions of spirit children of Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother need to obtain physical bodies, therefore mortals need to have as many children as possible:

It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can; . . . This is the reason why the doctrine of plurality of wives was revealed, that the noble spirits which are waiting for tabernacles might be brought forth. [104 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4 (September 21, 1856), p. 56.]

LDS Apostle Charles W. Penrose explained that a man may remarry in the temple after the death of his first wife, and will have both wives through eternity:

In the case of a man marrying a wife in the everlasting covenant who dies while he continues in the flesh and **marries another** by the same divine law, **each wife will come forth** [in the resurrection] **in her order and enter with him into his glory**. . . . Is not each of these wives entitled to her position in eternity, by virtue of the sealing power which made her part of the man? [105 Penrose, “*Mormon Doctrine*,” p. 51.]

After the death of his first wife, Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the LDS Church, was sealed in the temple to his second wife. In his 1955 book, *Doctrines of Salvation*, he commented, “. . . my wives will be mine in eternity.” [106 *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, p. 67.]

Harold B. Lee, eleventh president of the LDS Church, outlived his first wife and then remarried in the temple. He later wrote a poem commemorating the fact that he will have two wives in heaven:

My lovely Joan [his second wife] was sent to me:
So Joan joins Fern [his first wife]
That three might be, more fitted for eternity.
“O Heavenly Father, my thanks to thee.” [107 Harold B. Lee, *Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac*, p. 17.]

In a 2002 speech LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks commented on his two wives:

When I was 66, my [first] wife June died of cancer. Two years later—a year and a half ago—I married Kristen McMMain, [his second wife, in the LDS temple] the eternal companion who now stands at my side. [108 Dallin Oaks, “Timing,” speech delivered at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (January 29, 2002).]

By stating that his second wife is his “eternal companion” he is acknowledging that he believes both women will be his wives in the celestial kingdom.

In the *LDS Church Handbook* it is explained that a man may be sealed [married in the temple] to more than one women, but a woman may only be sealed to one man:

Women. A living woman may be sealed to only one husband.

...
Men. If a husband and wife have been sealed and the wife dies, the man may have another woman sealed to him if she is not already sealed. [109 *LDS Church Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops*, vol. 1, sec. 3, Temples and Marriage, 2010, p. 20.]

The first seven presidents of the LDS Church practiced polygamy: Joseph Smith (38 wives), Brigham Young (55 wives),

John Taylor (35 wives), Wilford Woodruff (35 wives), Joseph F. Smith (6 wives) and Heber J. Grant (3 wives). [110 George D. Smith *Nauvoo Polygamy*, Signature Books, 2011, Appendix B. Lists all of the wives of the first five LDS presidents. Joseph F. Smith's six wives and Heber J. Grant's wives are listed in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, p. 566 and vol. 3, p. 1350.]

Mormons will often defend their belief in and practice of plural marriage by citing examples from the Bible. However, the practice of plural marriage in the Old Testament was never commanded by God or presented as a doctrine. In the New Testament Paul gave instruction to the church that bishops (overseers) and deacons were to be the husbands of one wife. Paul wrote to his assistant, Timothy:

*A bishop [overseer] then must be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; . . . Let the deacons be **the husbands of one wife**, ruling their children and their own houses well.* (1 Timothy 3:2, 12, KJV)

Paul gave similar instructions to Titus:

*If any be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.* (Titus 1:6, KJV)

28. Death does not seal one's fate. LDS temple rites offer the dead a way out of spirit prison/hell through baptism for the dead and a proxy marriage ceremony.

The LDS Church maintains one of the largest genealogical libraries in the world. These records make it possible for a Mormon to trace one's lineage and then submit the names of deceased persons to the LDS temple for proxy baptismal and marriage rites. They claim these rites make it possible for the dead to accept the LDS faith and advance to the celestial kingdom.

Joseph Smith introduced the concept of baptism for the dead:

All must be saved on the same principles. It is for the same purpose that God gathers together His people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and

endowments, washing and anointings, etc. One of the ordinances of the house of the Lord is **baptism for the dead**. [111 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 308.]

On another occasion Joseph Smith preached:

The declaration this morning is, that as soon as the Temple and baptismal font are prepared, we calculate to give the Elders of Israel their washings and anointings, and attend to those last and more impressive ordinances, without which we cannot obtain celestial thrones. . . . These must, however, be a place [temple] built expressly for that purpose, and for men to be **baptized for their dead**. It must be built in this central place; for every man who wishes to save his father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends, must go through **all the ordinances for each one of them separately**, the same as for himself, from **baptism to ordination, washing and anointings, and receive all the keys and powers of the Priesthood**, the same as for himself. [112 *Ibid.*, pp. 362-363.]

Mormons often appeal to 1 Corinthians 15:29 as evidence that proxy baptism was practiced by the early church:

Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?

Notice, Paul does not present it as a regular practice of the Christian church, but merely mentions those who performed some sort of rite for the dead as added weight to his argument for the resurrection. Also, in the chapter he consistently refers to his audience as “you” and to himself and co-workers as “we,” reserving the use of “they” to refer to this unknown group. [113 See 1 Corinthians 15:1, 3, 29-31. For further information on this passage see [www. irr.org/mit/baptism-for-the-dead.html](http://www.irr.org/mit/baptism-for-the-dead.html)]

Surely, if baptism for the dead were a doctrine of the early church, as in Mormonism, there would be more instruction on it in the New Testament than this passing reference. The Bible is clear that “people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Curiously, even the Book of Mormon

fails to mention rites for the dead. In fact, according to the Book of Mormon there would be no need for baptism for the dead as it teaches once you die your fate is sealed. [114 See also *Book of Mormon*, Moroni 8:22-23.]

For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance **even until death**, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and **he doth seal you his**; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath **all power** over you; and this is the **final state** of the wicked. (Book of Mormon, Alma 34:35)

As for proxy temple marriages, neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon teach such a doctrine.

29. Christ visited the Americas shortly after His crucifixion and preached to the forefathers of the Native Americans.

In the Book of Mormon we read:

And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown unto them, . . . **insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ [in Israel] into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them [in America]**— Showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry [in America] shall be given hereafter. (3 Nephi 10:18-19)

However, there is no historical evidence that Israelites inhabited the Americas from 600 BC to 421 AD or that Christ visited the American continent shortly after his crucifixion. [115 See Simon Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA and the Mormon Church*, Signature Books, 2004.]

30. Dark skin is the result of a curse from God.

Both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses in the *Pearl of Great Price*, mention that dark skin is a curse from God. In the Book of Mormon we read:

And it came to pass that I beheld, after they had dwindled in **unbelief** they became a **dark, and loathsome**, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations. (1 Nephi 12:23)

And he [the Lord] had caused **the cursing** to come upon them, yea, even a **sore cursing**, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were **white, and exceedingly fair and delightful**, that they might **not** be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a **skin of blackness** to come upon them. (2 Nephi 5:21)

. . . their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a **white** and delightsome people. (2 Nephi 30:6)

[Note: This verse was changed in 1981 to read “pure” instead of “white.” But the other verses relating to skin color have been left unchanged.]

Behold, the Lamanites your brethren, whom ye hate because of their filthiness and **the cursing which hath come upon their skins**, are more righteous than you . . . I fear that unless ye shall repent of your sins that **their skins will be whiter than yours** . . . (Jacob 3:5, 8)

In the *Pearl of Great Price* we find similar language relating skin color to God’s curse:

For behold, the Lord shall **curse** the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a **blackness came upon all the children of Canaan**, that they were despised among all people. (Book of Moses 7:8)

And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam

save it was the **seed of Cain**, for the seed of Cain were **black**, and had not place among them. (Book of Moses 7:22)

Prior to 1978 African Blacks were not allowed to hold the LDS Priesthood but in June of that year President Spencer W. Kimball announced that he had received a revelation that Blacks could now be ordained. [116 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Declaration No. 2.] **American Indians, while believed to be under a curse of dark skin, were never barred from the LDS priesthood.**

There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that white skin is superior to dark skin or that dark skin denotes a curse from God. Paul admonished that all people, regardless of race, were to be accepted into the church:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

31. The Garden of Eden was in western Missouri. Adam will return to this spot at the end of the age.

LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe explained that through Joseph Smith’s revelations they knew that the Garden of Eden was in Missouri:

Latter-day Saints know, **through modern revelation, that the Garden of Eden was on the North American continent** and that Adam and Eve began their conquest of the earth in the upper part of what is now the **state of Missouri**. It seems very probable that the children of our first earthly parents moved down along the fertile, pleasant lands of the Mississippi valley. [117 John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, Three Volumes in One, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft 1960, p. 127.]

This teaching is reinforced in the LDS *Old Testament Student Manual* where it states:

It should be remembered that the Garden of Eden was in the land now known as North America. [118 *Old Testament Student Manual*, Religion 301, LDS Church, 2003, p. 56.]

In the *Doctrine and Covenants*, one of three LDS scriptures, we read:

D&C 116—Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, near Wight's Ferry, at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri, May 19, 1838. (History of the Church, 3:35)

Spring Hill is named by the Lord **Adam-ondi-Ahman**, because, said he, it is **the place where Adam shall come** to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

While Genesis does not give a specific location for the Garden of Eden, chapter 2 points to a location in the middle-east.

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14)

32. When Jesus returns to earth at the beginning of the Millennium he will secretly go to Adam-ondi-Ahman, in western Missouri, to set up New Jerusalem and the Kingdom of God on the earth prior to his coming in glory.

At that great gathering Adam offered sacrifices on an altar built for the purpose. A remnant of that very altar remained on the spot down through the ages. **On May 19, 1838, Joseph Smith and a number of his associates stood on the remainder of the pile of stones at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri.** There the Prophet taught them that **Adam** again would visit in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, **holding a great council as a**

prelude to the great and dreadful day of the Lord (*Mediation and Atonement*, pp. 69-70). At this council, all who have held keys of authority will give an accounting of their stewardship to **Adam. Christ will then come**, receive back the keys, and thus take one of the final steps preparatory to reigning personally upon the earth. [119 McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p. 21.]

The concept of Christ first returning secretly to earth to meet with the LDS authorities is outlined in the LDS college text, *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*:

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said that the council at Adam-ondi-Ahman, as prophesied in Daniel 7:9-14, will be “of the greatest importance to this world. At that time there will be a transfer of authority from the usurper and impostor, Lucifer, to the rightful King, Jesus Christ. Judgment will be set and all who have held keys will make their reports and deliver their stewardships, as they shall be required. Adam will direct this judgment, and then he will make his report, as the one holding the keys for this earth, to his Superior Officer, Jesus Christ. Our Lord will then assume the reins of government; directions will be given to the Priesthood; and He, whose right it is to rule, will be installed officially by the voice of the Priesthood there assembled. . . .

“When this gathering is held, the world will not know of it; the members of the [LDS] Church at large will not know of it, yet it shall be preparatory to the coming in the clouds of glory of our Savior Jesus Christ as the Prophet Joseph Smith has said.” [120 *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, p. 288.]

At the back of the LDS Bible, in their Bible Dictionary section, we find this description of the Kingdom of God on earth:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth, but is at the present limited to an ecclesiastical kingdom. During the millennial era, the kingdom of God will be both political and ecclesiastical . . . and will have worldwide jurisdiction in political realms when the Lord has made “a full end of all nations” (*D&C 87:6*). [121 *Holy Bible*, Bible Dictionary, LDS Church, 2003, p. 721.]

In the LDS Articles of Faith, composed by Joseph Smith, we read:

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

However, the Bible gives no indication that Christ will return to Missouri or establish the LDS Church as His kingdom on earth. Instead it teaches that Jesus will return to Jerusalem.

*In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out **from Zion**, the word of the LORD **from Jerusalem**. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:2-4)*

Some LDS mistakenly believe that this passage refers to two different places: "Zion" [Independence, Missouri], and "Jerusalem." However, this is simply a poetic way of referring to the same place: Zion is Jerusalem.

33. Noah set sail from Missouri. In fact, the first seven chapters of Genesis actually happened in the New World.

LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe gave these comments about the Garden of Eden and Noah's ark:

Later, the Prophet designated "Spring Hill," a hill of eminence about fifty or sixty miles north and somewhat to the east of Independence, as Adam-ondi-Ahman, . . . the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet." (D. & C. 116) . . .

Since Adam called together seven generations of his descendants at Adam-ondi-Ahman, it can well be believed that there was his old homestead. If so, **the Garden of Eden was probably not far distant**, for it was the entrance at the east of the Garden which was closed against them at the time of the “fall.” (Genesis 3:24) In fact, it has been commonly understood among the Latter-day Saints, from the teachings of the Prophet, that the temple was to be built in or near the location of the Garden of Eden. **That the Prophet actually taught that the Garden of Eden was in or near Independence, Missouri, is amply testified to by many who knew and heard him.** Heber C. Kimball, close associate and friend of the Prophet, said on one occasion:

The spot chosen for the Garden of Eden was Jackson County, in the state of Missouri, where Independence now stands; it was occupied in the morn of creation by Adam and his associates, who came with him for the express purpose of peopling this earth. (*Journal of Discourses*, 10:235)

Brigham Young, also a close associate of the Prophet, testified similarly:

In the beginning, after this earth was prepared for man, the Lord commenced his work upon what is now called the American continent, where the Garden of Eden was made. In the days of Noah, in the days of the Boating of the ark, he took the people to another part of the earth. (Discourses, p. 102)

In conversation with Orson Hyde, on March 15, 1857, President Young said:

You have been both to Jerusalem and Zion, and seen both. I have not seen either, for I have never been in Jackson County. **Now it is a pleasant thing to think of and to know where the Garden of Eden was.** Did you ever think of it? I do not think many do, for in Jackson County was the Garden of Eden. **Joseph has declared this, and I am as much bound to believe that as to believe that Joseph was a prophet of God.** (*Journal History*, March 15, 1857)

That is the position of the Latter-day Saints today, with respect to the much-discussed **location of the Garden of Eden.**

Adam, after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, **lived in the vicinity of the great Missouri and Mississippi rivers**. As his descendants multiplied, they would naturally settle along the fertile and climatically acceptable river valleys. **When the flood came in the days of Noah**, the Mississippi drainage must have increased to a tremendous volume, quite in harmony with the Biblical account. **Noah's ark would be floated on the mighty, rushing waters, towards the Gulf of Mexico**. With favorable winds, it would **cross the Atlantic** to the Eastern continents. There the human race, in its second start on earth, began to multiply and fill the earth.

The location of the Garden of Eden in America, and at Independence, Missouri, clears up many a problem which the Bible account of Eden and its garden has left in the minds of students. [122 John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, Three Volumes in One, Bookcraft, 1960, pp. 395-397.]

Curiously, Smith's 1838 designation of Missouri as the home of Adam and Eve contradicts his earlier 1830 revelation in the Book of Moses (part of the *Pearl of Great Price*). That account of the creation clearly presented the Garden of Eden as being in the Middle East. In it we read:

And, I, the Lord God caused a river to go out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. . . . And the name of the second river was called Gihon; the same that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river was Hiddekel; that which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river was the Euphrates. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 3:10, 13-14)

There is no biblical or historical support for the first seven chapters of Genesis occurring in North America.

34. Enoch, mentioned in Genesis 5:21-24, along with his entire city were taken out of the world and will be brought back to earth to be a part of New Jerusalem in Missouri.

In the Book of Moses we read:

... and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also **the resurrection of all men**; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, **to gather out mine elect** from the four quarters of the earth, **unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City**, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called **Zion, a New Jerusalem**.

And the Lord said unto **Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there**, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be **Zion**, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. (Moses 7:62-64)

The fourth LDS Prophet, Wilford Woodruff, added this information: “Joseph [Smith] also said that when the City of Enoch fled and was translated, it was where the Gulf of Mexico now is. It left that gulf a body of water. [123 Susan Staker, ed., *Waiting for World’s End, The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff*, Signature Books, 1993, p. 305.]

However, Genesis 5:24 only mentions that Enoch “walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” Nothing is said about a whole city being removed from the earth to return at the end of the age.

35. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims to be the only true church on earth and the only one accepted by God the Father.

The LDS Church maintains that shortly after the death of Christ’s apostles the church went into total apostasy, thus losing the priesthood authority to act in God’s name. [124 *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, LDS Church, 2003, pp. 2-4.] **Hundreds of years later, this situation was rectified when God called Joseph Smith to restore the gospel to the earth.**

According to Joseph Smith, when he prayed in 1820 to know which church to join, he was instructed that all the churches were rejected by God:

I was answered that I must join none of them for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that **all their creeds were an abomination in his sight**; that those professors were **all corrupt**; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.” (*PGP*, Joseph Smith—History 1:19)

And also those to whom these commandments were given, **might have power to lay the foundation of this church**, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, **the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth**, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 1:30)

Mormons will often point to 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 and 2 Timothy 4:3 as proof of a total apostasy. But these verses simply refer to “a falling away” and those who will go astray listening to false teachers. They say nothing of a total collapse of the Christian church. In fact, Jesus promised that his church would not pass away, therefore Christians believe that it has remained on earth since its founding without need for a latter-day restoration.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:18)

Jude admonished the early Christians to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3)

Furthermore, the Christian church is not a particular organization. As believers in Christ we are part of God’s church.

“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:19-20)

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized

by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

36. The Bible is insufficient and mistranslated.

While the LDS Church uses the King James Version of the Bible, they view it as undependable, having been altered through the ages. They accept their other scriptures as more authoritative. In the LDS Articles of Faith, at the back of their *Pearl of Great Price*, we read:

8. We believe the **Bible** to be the word of God **as far as it is translated correctly**; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, **all that He does now reveal**, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

In the LDS instruction manual, *Gospel Principles*, we read:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts four books as scripture: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. These books are called the standard works of the Church. The inspired words of our living prophets are also accepted as scripture. [125 *Gospel Principles*, 2009, p. 45]

The author of the Book of Mormon anticipated Christians objecting to further scripture and warned those who reject the Book of Mormon:

We be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from

them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.

Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost. (2 Nephi 28:29-31)

In the next chapter we read:

And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: **A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.** (2 Nephi 29:3)

All of this was supposedly written at approximately 550 BC, long before there was any concept of a Bible.

The LDS Church further teaches that only those holding their priesthood can speak for God. We read in the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

Again I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church. (*D&C* 42:11)

While Mormons test the reliability of the Bible by comparing it to their current Prophet's words, Christians test any person's message against the Bible. When Paul and Silas preached that the messiah had come, as promised in the Old Testament, the Jews in Berea examined the scriptures to make sure they were correct:

*Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.** As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.* (Acts 17:11-12)

Christians readily agree that we do not have all the words of Christ, but John declared we have all we need to come to Christ for eternal life.

*Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **But these are written***

that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

37. The LDS prophet is not bound by the teachings of the Bible or their other scriptures. He could give a revelation at any time and it would not need to agree with the revelations of the past.

In *Doctrine and Covenants* 21:4-5 we read:

Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his [the prophet's] words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For **his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth**, in all patience and faith.

Speaking at the October 2010 LDS Conference, Claudio Costa, one of the top leaders in the LDS Church, reiterated President Ezra Taft Benson's famous speech, "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet":

In 1980, when President Ezra Taft Benson was serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he gave a powerful message about obedience to the prophets . . . titled "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet," . . . I would like to share with you some of the principles that President Benson taught:

First: The prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything . . .

Second fundamental: **The living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works . . .**

Third fundamental: The living prophet is more important to us than a dead prophet . . .

Fourth fundamental: **The prophet will never lead the Church astray . . .**

Fifth fundamental: The prophet is not required to have any particular earthly training or credentials to speak on any subject or act on any matter at any time . . .

Sixth: The prophet does not have to say “Thus saith the Lord” to give us scripture. . . .

Ninth: The prophet can receive revelation on any matter—temporal or spiritual. . . .

Tenth: The prophet may be involved in civic matters. . . .

Fourteenth: The prophet and the presidency—the living prophet and the first presidency—follow them and be blessed; reject them and suffer . . . [126 Claudio R. M. Costa, “Obedience to the Prophets,” *Ensign* (Nov. 2010).]

However a prophet will not contradict the Bible:

Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. (Isaiah 8:20)

A prophet will not lead you away from God:

*If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, “**Let us follow other gods**” (gods you have not known) “and let us worship them,” **you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him.** (Deuteronomy 13:1-4)*

When Joseph Smith taught that God is a resurrected being who achieved godhood, he was certainly leading people after a different God than the eternal God presented in the Bible.

38. Only LDS priesthood authority is accepted by God. No minister, whether Catholic or Protestant, has the proper authority to administer baptism, communion or ordain one to the ministry.

The LDS Church believes that God removed priesthood authority from man shortly after the death of Christ's apostles. In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read:

LDS rejection of much post biblical Christianity is based on belief in an ancient APOSTASY . . . **Apostolic authority ceased just after the New Testament period**, and without apostolic leadership and authority the Church was soon overwhelmed by alien intellectual and cultural pressures. [127 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, p. 400.]

Joseph Smith taught:

Respecting the **Melchizedek Priesthood**, the sectarians never professed to have it; consequently they never could save any one, and would all be damned together. [128 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 322.]

The LDS Church does not recognize any baptism performed outside of their priesthood:

Behold, I say unto you that **all old covenants have I caused to be done away** in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, . . . Wherefore, although a man should be **baptized** an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works. (*D&C 22:1-3*)

President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

Presumptuous and **blasphemous** are they who **purport to baptize, bless, marry, or perform other sacraments** in the name of the Lord while in fact **lacking** his specific authorization. And no one can obtain God's authority from reading the Bible or from just a desire to serve the Lord, no matter how pure his motives. [129 *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 494.]

In the LDS Church there are two divisions of priesthood, the Aaronic Priesthood (usually held by teenage boys 12 years old to 18 years old) and the Melchizedek Priesthood (typically bestowed on a 18-year-old male prior to his two-year mission). They believe these priesthoods were operative in the New Testament church and necessary today to act in the name of God.

However, the Aaronic Priesthood of the Old Testament, where priests officiated in the temple and performed animal sacrifice, came to an end at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. Hebrews 5:1 states:

*Every **high priest** is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.*

Christ fulfilled the Aaronic Priesthood and is the only High Priest in the New Testament church.

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:19-20)

Further on we read that Jesus was not descended from Aaron, but from Judah, and thus was not eligible to be a Levitical (Aaronic) priest.

*If perfection could have been attained through the **Levitical priesthood**—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for **another priest** to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when **the priesthood is changed**, the law must be changed also. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. (Hebrews 7:11-14)*

Marvin Cowan provided this information on Old Testament priesthood:

In the Old Testament, Aaronic or Levitical priesthood was not received by ordination, but it was inherited. Every priest was

born an Israelite of the tribe of Levi and as a descendant of Aaron (Num. 3:6-12; D. & C. 107:14.) . . .

. . . While Old Testament Priests functioned as mediators, Christ is *now* the only Mediator (Priest) between men and God (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:24-25; John 14:6). [130 Cowan, *Mormon Claims Answered*, p. 72.]

Paul instructed Timothy to appoint others to service who have shown themselves to be faithful, but nothing was said of ordaining them priests according to the Aaronic or Melchizedec priesthood.

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:2)

39. In Mormonism the Sacrament (communion) of the Lord's Supper is composed of water and regular bread and is observed weekly in LDS services.

The Book of Mormon describes the sacrament as “bread” and “wine” (Moroni 4:3; 5:1-2). One of Joseph Smith’s early revelations also described the sacrament as “bread and wine” (*D&C 20:40*).

However, in 1830 Smith declared that an angel instructed him not to buy communion wine from non-members (*D&C 27:2-4*). Wine was allowed if it was produced by the LDS Church (*D&C 89:5-6*).

For years the LDS Church utilized both water and wine for their sacrament. The universal use of water seems to have occurred shortly after 1900. [131 Thomas Alexander, “The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 14 no. 3 (Autumn 1981), p. 79.] In the heading for Section 27 in the *Doctrine and Covenants* we read: “Water is now used instead of wine in the sacramental services of the Church.”

Following the New Testament pattern, most Christian churches serve either wine or grape juice for communion (or sacrament). They also traditionally use unleavened bread, crackers or wafers instead of leavened bread which the LDS use. (See Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

40. When having a vision, the way to test whether a messenger is from God or the devil is to ask to shake hands with the being.

In 1843 Joseph Smith gave the following revelation regarding “the three grand keys” for the testing of angels:

Doctrine & Covenants, Section 129

Instructions given by Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, February 9, 1843, making known three grand keys by which the correct nature of ministering angels and spirits may be distinguished. (see History of the Church, 5:267)

1 There are two kinds of beings in heaven, namely: **Angels, who are resurrected personages**, having bodies of flesh and bones—

2 For instance, Jesus said: *Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*

3 Secondly: **the spirits of just men made perfect, they who are not resurrected**, but inherit the same glory.

4 When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God, **offer him your hand** and request him to **shake hands** with you.

5 If he be an angel he will do so, and you will feel his hand.

6 If he be the spirit of a just man made perfect he will come in his glory; for that is the only way he can appear—

7 Ask him to **shake hands** with you, but he will not move, because it is contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive; but he will still deliver his message.

8 **If it be the devil as an angel of light**, when you ask him to **shake hands** he will offer you his hand, and you will not feel anything; you may therefore detect him.

9 These are three grand keys whereby you may know whether any administration is from God.

In the LDS teaching aid *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* we read:

D&C 129:4-7. What Is the Significance of Shaking Hands?

If the messenger is a **resurrected personage** whose flesh one feels when shaking hands, the messenger is an angel from God. But **spirits cannot clasp hands**, since they do not have flesh and bones with which to do it. For spirits to pretend to an ability they do not possess would be deceit, and one who would attempt it would not be a “just man.” Therefore, the spirits of just men made perfect will not move when a hand is extended toward them. [132 *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, p. 321.]

Curiously, there does not seem to be any LDS references where Joseph Smith or his successors ever used this method. If this revelation represents the “three grand keys” for detecting whether a messenger is from God or the Devil it is odd that LDS leaders never claim to have used the test.

On the other hand, Paul warned the early Christians about false teachers and exhorted them to compare their message against the message already delivered to them through the apostles. But he never instructs them to shake hands as a test.

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a **different gospel** — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or **an angel** from heaven should preach a gospel **other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse!** As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse! (Galatians 1:6-9)*

*But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and **preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached**, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. (2 Corinthians 11:3-5)*

41. According to Joseph Smith, four of Christ’s disciples did not die but have been left on earth to do missionary work. These include the Apostle John and three Book of Mormon disciples.

LDS believe that John was transformed and Jesus left him on earth to do evangelism. Joseph Smith claimed to receive by revelation the following translation of the “parchment by John”:

And the Lord said unto me: **John my beloved**, what desirest thou? . . . And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me **power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee**. 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.** (*D&C 7:1-3*)

Evidently Joseph Smith misinterpreted John 21:20-23. Jesus did not say that John would remain alive, but merely pointed out to Peter that John’s future mission was not Peter’s concern.

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved [John] was following them. When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die.

But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

The LDS Church also teaches that three Nephites, Jesus’ disciples in the New World, did not taste of death but were transformed and left on earth to do evangelism. The Book of Mormon states:

And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which **John, my beloved**, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.

Therefore, more blessed are ye, **for ye shall never taste of death**; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. . . .

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he touched every one of [the disciples] with his finger save it were **the three who were to tarry**, and then he departed. . . . But it came to pass that they did again minister upon the face of the earth . . .

And now, whether they were mortal or immortal, from the day of their transfiguration, I know not; But this much I know, according to the record which hath been given—they did go forth upon the face of the land, and did minister unto all the people, uniting as many to the church as would believe in their preaching; baptizing them, and as many as were baptized did receive the Holy Ghost. . . .

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 upon 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. . . .

Behold, I was about to write the names of **those who were never to taste of death**, but the Lord forbade; therefore I write them not, for they are hid from the world. But behold, I have seen them, and they have ministered unto me. And behold **they will be among the Gentiles**, and the Gentiles shall know them not. They will also be among the Jews, and the Jews shall know them not. . . .

And they [the three Nephites] are as the angels of God, and . . . can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good. Therefore, great and marvelous works shall be wrought by them, before the great and coming day [of judgment] . . . (3 Nephi 28:6-31)

LDS Apostle Joseph B. Wirthlin also commented on the three Nephites:

The life of Moroni [in the Book of Mormon] is especially instructive in teaching perseverance. The obstacles he faced may seem beyond belief to us. He saw the entire Nephite nation destroyed by the sword in a terrible war [at approximately 400 AD] because of the wickedness of the people. . . . Yet he continued to keep the record as his father had commanded him.

As a result of his perseverance and righteousness, **he was ministered to by the Three Nephites, whom the Savior permitted to tarry until His second coming (see Mormon 8:11)**. [133 Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Never Give Up,” *Ensign* (Nov. 1987).]

LDS Apostle Jeffrey Holland explained the role of the three Nephites in our day:

These three Nephites continue in their translated state today, just as when they went throughout the lands of Nephi. . . . they are yet ministering to Jew, Gentile, and the scattered tribes of Israel, even all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. [134 Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon*, Deseret Book, 1997, p. 307.]

While stories of the three Nephites used to be prevalent in Mormon circles, the leaders have encouraged their people not to dwell on the topic. In a training session for new teachers Holland stated:

Avoid self-serving performance and vanity [as a teacher]. Don't try to dazzle everyone with how brilliant you are. Dazzle them with how brilliant the gospel is. **Don't worry about the location of the lost tribes or the Three Nephites.** [135 Jeffrey R. Holland, "Teaching and Learning in the Church," *Ensign* (June 2007). (www.tinyurl.com/cjsvkhq)]

The 2009 *Book of Mormon Teacher Manual* instructs teachers to discuss with their students the passages in 3 Nephi 28 that speak of the three Nephites, but to

"Point out that the Savior told the Three Nephites that they would be among the Jews and Gentiles, who would not know them (see 3 Nephi 28:25–30). Therefore, many of the stories people hear about the Three Nephites are probably untrue." [136 *Book of Mormon Teacher Manual*, LDS Church, 2009, Chapter 46: 3 Nephi 27–30.]

One of the questions often asked about John and the three Nephites is how there could have been a total apostasy, as asserted by the LDS Church, if there have been four apostles on the earth since the time of Christ? Why wouldn't they have been able to ordain future apostles and keep the church from falling into a total apostasy?

Conclusion

From the forgoing we see that there is a vast difference between the teachings of the LDS Church and standard Christianity. The LDS Church continues to proclaim that it is the only true church, with the only priesthood authority recognized by God, and that it is a restoration of the original church established by Christ. LDS president Lorenzo Snow preached:

Mormonism, in short, is the primitive Christian faith restored, the ancient Gospel brought back again—this time to usher in the last dispensation, introduce the Millennium, and wind up the work of redemption as pertaining to this planet. [137 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*, LDS Church, 2012, p. 240.]

Several Christians have lately written that the LDS leaders are gradually moving away from the more heretical doctrines of past leaders. However, when one reads the current LDS manuals it is clear that they are continuing to teach that God was once a mortal on some other planet, that he and his wife achieved godhood, and that mortals have the same potential to reach godhood as they have done. For example, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, Smith is quoted as saying:

“**God Himself was once as we are now**, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret.” [138 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, p. 40.]

“Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and **you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves**, and to be kings and priests to God, . . .” [139 *Ibid.*, p. 221.]

This teaching is also in the 2004 *Ensign*:

We cannot understand the purpose of this mortal life—why we are here—unless we first understand who we are, where we came from, and what our eternal destiny is. These truths, found in the scriptures and restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, teach us that we are **literal spirit children of God**, that we lived

with Him in a premortal existence, and that **we have within us the seeds of godhood, the potential to become like Him.** [140 “The Fulness of the Gospel: The Purpose of Life,” A series examining doctrines unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Ensign* (August 2006): p. 64.]

On the other hand, Christians worship a God who has always been God and has never been less than He is today. He alone is the author of our salvation, the bestower of grace (unmerited favor) on all who place their faith in Christ. The gospel of Mormonism demands the observance of countless rules and rituals in order to attain eternal life. As one Christian recently explained:

It is our hearts’ desire that Mormons will truly understand and accept the biblical teaching of forgiveness of sins and experience the peace that comes only from salvation apart from works. [Romans 4:4-8] Mormons have no assurance of eternal salvation because they don’t know if or when they have done enough good works to obtain forgiveness for the sins they know they still commit. [see *Gospel Principles*, p. 279] . . .

[Mormonism] is a far cry from the biblical teaching that we can be totally forgiven of our sins, today, have complete assurance of our salvation in this life, and have peace knowing that to be absent from this body is to be immediately present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). This is the true biblical gospel (good news) taught by Jesus and by His disciples after His death and still today. The gospel is not a church organization with endless works and rules. Jesus paid it all! [141 Newsletter, Institute for Religious Research (August 2012).]

As Paul explained to the Christians at Ephesus:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. . . . But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:1-5)

Appendixes

- A. Terminology Differences Between LDS and the Bible
- B. LDS Eternal Progression Chart
- C. LDS and Bible Teachings About God
 - Part One: LDS View of God
 - Part Two: What the Bible Says About God
- D. Christian and LDS Beliefs Compared
- E. Contradictions in LDS Scriptures
- F. Sharing Your Faith with Latter-day Saints

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; *Doctrines 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. (*Doctrines 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; *Doctrines 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)

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 Telesstial 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 Telesstial. 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 Telesstial 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)

LDS References for Terminology Differences:

Book of Mormon

Doctrine and Covenants

Pearl of Great Price

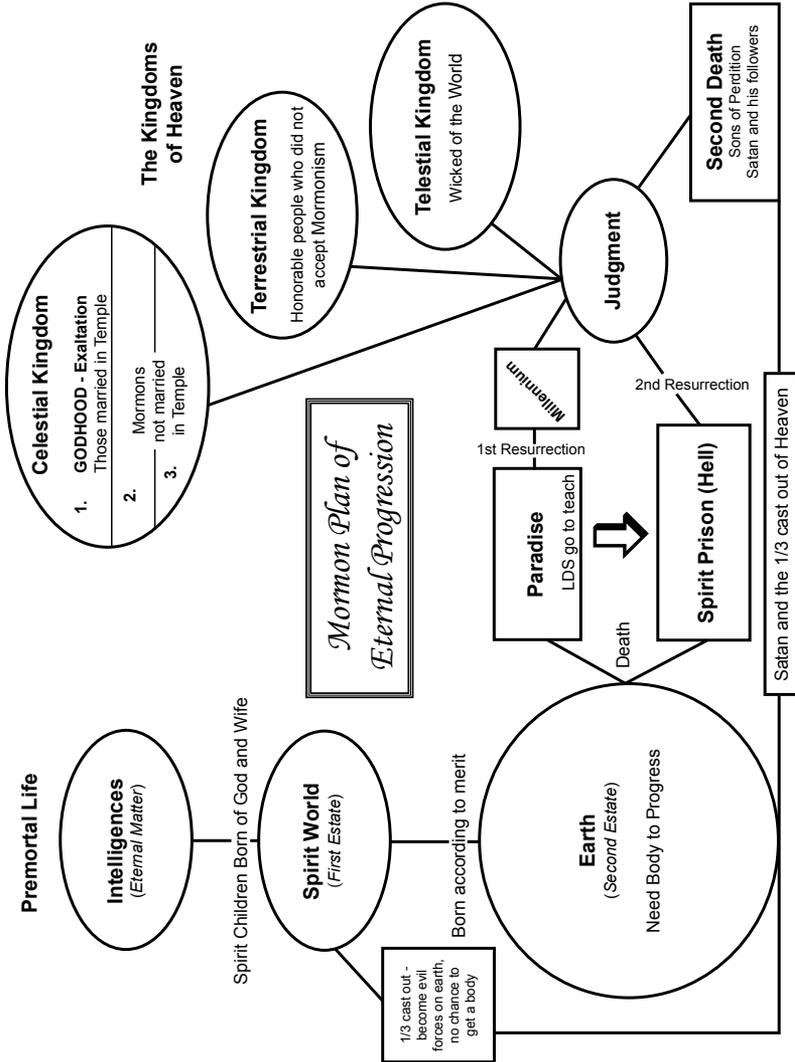
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Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith

Gospel Principles, published by the LDS Church, 1995

Doctrines of the Gospel, Student Manual, published by the LDS Church, 2000



LDS and Bible Teachings About God

Part One

LDS View of God

LDS Prophet Joseph Smith taught that God was once a mortal man:

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, . . .

“It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, . . . and that **He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did; . . . you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you,** namely, by going from one small degree to another, . . . **from exaltation to exaltation,** until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings. and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power” (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, ch. 14, pp. 305-6).

LDS President Brigham Young declared that God was once a finite being:

“It appears ridiculous to the world, under their darkened and erroneous traditions, that **God has once been a finite being**” (*Deseret News*, Nov. 16, 1859, p. 290).

LDS President Joseph Fielding Smith said that God had a father, a grandfather, etc.:

“Our **father in heaven**, according to the Prophet, **had a father**, and since there has been a condition of this kind through all eternity, **each Father had a Father**” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:47).

LDS President Joseph F. Smith taught that God was born as a mortal on some other earth:

“I know that God is a being with body, parts and passions . . . Man was born of woman; Christ, the Savior, was born of woman; and **God, the Father was born of woman**” (*Deseret News*, Church News, Sept. 19, 1936, p. 2).

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie taught:

“The Father is a glorified, perfected, **resurrected, exalted man who worked out his salvation by obedience** to the same laws he has given to us so that we may do the same” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 64).

LDS Apostle Melvin Ballard explained that God has a wife:

“For as we have a **Father in heaven**, so also we have a **Mother** there, a glorified, exalted, ennobled **Mother**” (As quoted in *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, LDS Church manual, 1976, p. 129).

LDS Doctrine and Covenants promises the faithful LDS couple that they can achieve godhood in the same manner as God the Father:

“. . . if a **man marry a wife**, and make a covenant with her for **time and for all eternity**, . . . they shall [have] . . . a **continuation of the seeds** [children] forever and ever. Then shall they **be gods**, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, . . . Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, . . . and **continuation of the lives**, . . . [endless procreation of spirit children]” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132:18-22).

LDS President Brigham Young taught that faithful Mormons can achieve godhood:

“Intelligent beings are organized **to become Gods**, even the Sons of God, to dwell in the **presence of the Gods**, and become associated with the highest intelligences that dwell in eternity. We are now in the school, and must practice upon what we receive” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 245).

LDS President Joseph F. Smith said:

“We are **precisely** in the **same condition** and under the **same circumstances** that **God** our heavenly Father was **when he was passing through this, or a similar ordeal**” (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 54).

LDS Apostle James E. Talmage taught that God progressed from a mortal to a god:

“We believe in a God who is Himself **progressive**, whose majesty is intelligence; whose perfection consists **in eternal advancement** — a Being who has **attained** His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow, whose glory it is their heritage to share. **In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct charges of blasphemy, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: ‘As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be’**” (*Articles of Faith*, ch. 24, pp. 430-431).

As recently as 2007 both Apostles Boyd K. Packer and Dallin Oaks, during an interview for PBS, explained that God the father has a resurrected body.

Apostle Boyd K. Packer stated:

“That vision [Joseph Smith's 1820 vision] taught us some things. We learned about the personality of God the Father, a **resurrected Being**, as part of our gospel.”

Apostle Dallin Oaks used the same term when he was interviewed:

“The first revelation received by Joseph Smith was the appearance to him of the Father and the Son embodied, separate, identifiable, tangible Beings who appeared to him in what we refer to as the First Vision. And that first revelation, concerning the nature of God as an embodied, glorified, **resurrected Being**, challenged the creeds of Christianity. Christianity describes God as a disembodied, incomprehensible, spiritual entity that fills the whole universe, and an indistinguishable Father and Son.”

LDS President Lorenzo Snow stated:

“As man now is, God once was:

“As God now is, man may be.”

(*Teachings of President of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*, 2012, p. 83)

Part Two

What the Bible Says About God

1. ALWAYS GOD - in the past as well as in the future.

“Art thou not from ever-lasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?”
(Habakkuk 1:12)

“For I am the Lord, I change not.” (Malachi 3:6)

“... from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” (Psalm 90:2)

“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent.” (Numbers 23:19)

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, . . . who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.” (Romans 1:22-25)

The LDS god started as a finite man and progressed to godhood.

2. ALWAYS HOLY - Both in the past and future.

“... a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”
(Deuteronomy 32:4)

“I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee.” (Hosea 11:9)

“The Lord is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works.” (Psalm 145:17)

“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)

“Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.” (Psalm 119:142)

The LDS god achieved holiness.

3. ALL KNOWING - Both in the past and in the future.

“Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? . . . There is no searching of his understanding.” (Isaiah 40:13, 14, 28)

“Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” (Psalm 147:5)

“O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” (Psalm 139:1-6)

The LDS god had to learn everything.

4. ALL POWERFUL

“The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” (Revelation 19:6)

“. . . his eternal power and Godhead.” (Romans 1:20)

“Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.” (1 Chronicles 29:11)

The LDS god attained his power.

5. OMNIPRESENT

“The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me: and where is the place of my rest?” (Isaiah 66:1)

“Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” (Jeremiah 23:23-24)

The LDS god can be in only one place at a time.

6. ACTED ALONE IN CREATION

“I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.” (Isaiah 44:24)

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” (Psalm 33:6)

“Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all.” (Nehemiah 9:6)

The LDS god cooperated with the Council of Gods to create.

7. NO OTHER GODS

“I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour.” (Isaiah 43:10-11)

“I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . is there a God beside me; yea, there is no God; I know not any.” (Isaiah 44:6, 8)

“To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? . . . for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me.” (Isaiah 46:5, 9)

“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, . . .” (Hebrews 6: 13)

“I am the Lord; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another.” (Isaiah 42:8)

The LDS God has a father and mother, grandparents, brothers and sisters, etc.

CHRISTIAN AND LDS BELIEFS COMPARED

BIBLE VIEW OF GOD THE FATHER

- Infinite
- Always God
- Absolutely holy
- Eternally all knowing
- All powerful
- Omnipresent
- No other gods
- Creator of all that exists
- Matter was created
- Created our spirits

LDS VIEW OF GOD THE FATHER

- Finite
- Became God—first mortal on some other world, died, resurrected, then achieved Godhood.
- Achieved holiness
- Had to learn all things, was originally a finite mortal before achieving godhood.
- Attained power. Other mortals achieved godhood before him.
- One place at a time, has a resurrected physical body.
- Every God has a Goddess wife, and Heavenly Parents over them. He also has grandparents, great-grandparents, etc. who are Gods over other worlds.
- God used existing matter to make this world, but other gods have made other worlds. Matter is eternal.
- Matter has always existed
- Heavenly Father and Mother God literally gave birth to our spirits in heaven. We were raised in heaven to full adulthood prior to our birth on earth as mortals.

BIBLE VIEW OF GOD THE FATHER

- Father, Son, Holy Ghost = One God. No Heavenly Mother or other gods.

LDS VIEW OF GOD THE FATHER

- Father, Son, Holy Ghost = Three Gods. LDS say there are three in the Godhead yet fail to mention they are literally three different Gods, two of whom have physical, resurrected bodies. They also believe there is a Mother God with a resurrected body, plus countless other deities.

BIBLE VIEW OF JESUS

- Eternally God - No beginning or end
- He is the Creator

- We are His creation

LDS VIEW OF JESUS

- Literal spirit child born of God and Wife
- Our literal older brother, helped in creation, along with Adam/Michael and others.
- Jesus and humans are all the same species and literal children born to heavenly parents.

BIBLE VIEW OF HOLY GHOST

- Always existed as God
- Father, Son and Holy Spirit/Ghost are one God

LDS VIEW OF HOLY GHOST

- A spirit being who achieved godhood
- Holy Ghost is a totally separate God from Father and Son

BIBLE VIEW OF MAN

- Created on earth
- Spiritually Adopted Child of God
- Potential to live with God as a forgiven sinner

LDS VIEW OF MAN

- Pre-mortal birth to God and Wife
- Literal child of God
- Potential to become a god

BIBLE VIEW OF SATAN

- Created as Angel then fell - Not same species as Jesus or mortals

LDS VIEW OF SATAN

- Fallen spirit brother of Jesus and all mortals

Contradictions in LDS Scriptures
by Sandra Tanner

One God

Book of Mormon:
Alma 11:27-39, 44;
2 Nephi 31:21; Mormon 7:7; 3
Nephi 11:27;
Testimony of Three Witnesses

Plural Gods

Doctrine and Covenants:
Section 121:32
Section 132:18-20, 37

God is a Spirit

Book of Mormon: Alma 18:26-28;
22:8-11

God Has a Body

D&C: Section 130:22

God Dwells in Heart

Book of Mormon: Alma 34:36

God Does Not Dwell in Heart

D&C: Section 130:3

Creation - One God

Book of Mormon: 2 Nephi 2:14;
Jacob 4:9
Pearl of Great Price: Book of
Moses - Chapter 2

Creation - Plural Gods

Pearl of Great Price:
Book of Abraham - Chapters 4
and 5

God Cannot Lie

Book of Mormon: Ether 3:12;
2 Nephi 9:34

God Commands Lying

Pearl of Great Price: Book of
Abraham - Ch. 2:22-25

God's Word Unchangeable

Book of Mormon: Alma 41:8

God's Word Can Change

D&C: Section 56:4-5

No Pre-Existence of Man

Book of Mormon: Jacob 4:9;
Alma 18:28, 34-36

Man Pre-Existed

Doctrine and Covenants: Sec-
tion 93:23, 29-33; *PGP:* Book
of Abraham - Chapter 3:18,
21-23

Death Seals Man's Fate

Book of Mormon: Mosiah 2:36-39; Alma 34:32-35

Chance After Death

Doctrine and Covenants:
Section 76:106-112; 88:99

Heathen Saved Without Baptism

Book of Mormon: Moroni 8:22-23; 2 Nephi 9:25-26; Mosiah 15:24-27

Baptism for Dead

Doctrine and Covenants:
Section 128:5, 17-18

Heaven or Hell

Book of Mormon: 1 Nephi 15:35; 2 Nephi 28:22; Mosiah 16:11, 27:31; Alma 41:4-8, 42:16

Three Kingdoms in Heaven - Most Saved

Doctrine and Covenants:
Section 76:43, 70-112

Murder Can Be Forgiven

Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 30:2

No Forgiveness For Murder

D&C: Section 42:18

Polygamy Condemned

Book of Mormon: Jacob 1:15; 2:24; 3:5; Mosiah 11:2

Polygamy Commanded

Doctrine & Covenants:
Section 132:1, 37-39, 61

Against Paid Ministry

Book of Mormon: 2 Nephi 26:31; Mosiah 27:5

For Paid Ministry

D&C: Sec. 42:71-73; 43:12-13; 51:13-14

Corrupt Churches Promise Forgiveness For Money

Book of Mormon: Mormon 8:32

Church Members Who Tithe Will Not Burn

D&C: Section 64:23

Adam in America

Doctrine and Covenants:
Section 107:53:116:1; 117:8

Adam in Old World

Pearl of Great Price: Book of Moses 3:8, 10-15

Sharing Your Faith with Latter-day Saints

By Sandra Tanner

One of the most important factors in sharing your faith with a Mormon (officially known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) is your sincere friendship. Usually former LDS tell me that they had a close friend that talked to them about the Lord. This friend acted as a bridge between Mormon assumptions and explaining what the Bible actually says.

Usually Mormons will already view themselves as Christians and will accept you as one as well. However, they would see you as only having one fourth of the gospel while they have the whole package. Your faith in Christ, according to them, assures you of a place in heaven. However, in order to go to the highest part of heaven, the Celestial Kingdom (godhood, exaltation), you would need to have a Mormon baptism and a Mormon temple marriage. (See *Mormons Hope to Become Gods of Their Own Worlds* on our web site.) They believe that if you don't join the LDS Church during this life you will be given a chance to accept it during the millennium.

Remember that they view you as the one with the defective belief system. You have only the Bible (which accounts for your "limited" understanding) while they have additional light from their other scriptures, the Book of Mormon, the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the *Pearl of Great Price*. Beyond this, they also have the teachings of their prophets.

Keep in mind that we are part of a process. Paul wrote: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." (1 Corinthians 3:6) It may take several encounters with various Christians before the Mormon will seriously start re-evaluating his/her beliefs. Pray that God will continue to bring Christians into the Mormon's life.

Terminology Differences

It is important to learn how Christian terms have been redefined by Mormonism. (See our *Terminology Differences* sheet.) If you went as a missionary to China you would learn their language and something about their customs. We should do the same with those embracing the LDS system. Don't assume the Mormon uses Christian terms the same as you do. Their definitions of God, salvation, eternal life, heaven, etc. are very different.

Persecution?

When opportunities arise for you to talk with Mormons about their beliefs, remember to show them the same respect and courtesy you would expect from them. Be sure to display confidence (not arrogance) in what you discuss. Mormons tend to interpret any timidity as evidence that you do not speak with the authority of God.

Since Mormons tend to feel any challenge to their church is a form of persecution we must be careful how we approach them so that it will not reinforce this perception.

Joseph Smith claimed in his first vision which is printed at the back of their *Pearl of Great Price*, that God informed him all other churches were “wrong” and that “all their creeds were an abomination in his sight.” Since Smith was the one who first attacked all other churches, we are simply responding to his charges. Merely comparing belief systems is not “persecution.”

Importance of the Book of Mormon?

Mormons will often ask people if they have read the Book of Mormon and prayed about it. They assume that if someone believed it he would accept the rest of Mormonism. Here are a few questions to ask:

- *Since the Introduction to the Book of Mormon states that it contains “the fulness of the everlasting gospel,” can you give me verses that teach the doctrines of pre-earth existence, plural gods with wives, temple marriage, chance to repent after you die, temple rituals for the dead, three levels of heaven, etc.?*
- *Where do I find your concept of eternal marriage in the Book of Mormon? (It isn’t in there—it’s in the Doctrine and Covenants, sec. 132.)*
- *If you truly believe the Book of Mormon, doctrinally, how do you accept the Doctrine and Covenants or Pearl of Great Price since these books teach different concepts? (See Contradictions in LDS Scriptures sheet.)*
- *Why do Mormons approach people with the Book of Mormon if it doesn’t contain their most important doctrines? Why don’t they give out copies of their other scriptures instead of the Book of Mormon?*

This gives us a chance to talk about the value of the Book of Mormon, as opposed to the Bible. Ask them:

- *What specific doctrine of Mormonism is in the Book of Mormon that isn't in the Bible?*

Which Bible?

The Book of Mormon declares that the Bible has been deliberately altered (see 1 Nephi 13:26-28). Mormons will often point to all the different translations of the Bible as proof that it has been changed. You can ask them something like:

- *Does translation always lessen scripture's value or change its teaching?*
- *What about the Book of Mormon? How many translations have been made of it? Is it less reliable in French or German?*
- *Does the church put a disclaimer on the Book of Mormon in other languages as they do with the Bible? If not, why not?*
- *If professional LDS translators can reliably take the English Book of Mormon into French, why can't professional translators take the Greek New Testament into English?*
- *If the Bible is in such bad shape, which verses are wrong, so I won't use them?*

Mormons will often claim the Bible is incomplete, that various books have been left out of our current Bible.

- *Why doesn't your prophet restore the lost books or correct the translation?*
- *If your prophet has not felt the need to restore these missing books of the Bible how important can they be?*
- *Which books were left out? Which ones should be added?*
- *Joseph Smith did a revised version of the Bible, why doesn't the LDS Church print it? They print extracts from it at the back of their Bible—why not use the whole thing? Smith*

did not add any lost books to his revision. In fact, he left out the book Song of Solomon.

Remind them that even though we don't have all of the words of Jesus, John assured us that we have all that we need to know about gaining eternal life (see John 20:30-31). Also, Jesus promised "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

If Mormonism is a restoration of original Christianity they would need to demonstrate that LDS doctrines were originally in the Bible but later deleted. However, there is no manuscript evidence of revisions of the New Testament that eliminated cardinal doctrines. Also, the scripture quotes in the writings of the early church fathers show that there were no doctrinal changes. A good book on the reliability of the Bible is *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* by F. F. Bruce.

Total Apostasy?

Mormonism asserts that in Smith's first vision he was told that there had been a total apostasy of the Christian church and that he was to be God's instrument in restoring it to the earth. While the Bible speaks of people falling away from the truth, it never indicates that there would be a total apostasy. Mormons often misuse 1 Timothy 4:1 which says that "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Notice that the verse merely indicates "some" would depart from the faith, not that there would be a total apostasy. You might ask your friend something like this:

- *How could there have been a total apostasy of the church since Jesus promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"?* (Matthew 16:18) Jesus also promised, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

Another problem with the LDS claim of a total apostasy is their own teaching that John, one of Christ's twelve apostles, did not die (see *D&C* 7:1-3) but was to remain on the earth to "prophesy before nations." Besides John, three of the twelve disciples in the Book of Mormon were granted their desire to remain on earth, to "bring the souls of men unto me," until Christ's return (Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 28:6-9).

- *With four apostles remaining on the earth, how could there have been a total apostasy?*

Mormonism also teaches that the true church will have the same structure as Christ instituted. Thus they argue that the true church will have twelve apostles at its head. However, the Mormons do not conform to their own standard as they have three apostles in their First Presidency as well as their twelve, thus making fifteen apostles at the head of their church. Also, Deacons were to be mature men, not twelve-year-old boys (see 1 Timothy 3:8-12).

True Church?

Mormons will often say that the Christian world is too divided to have the truth. Yet there have been over 100 different churches claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. (See the book *Divergent Paths of the Restoration*.) Many of them have totally different beliefs from the others. Obviously, LDS scriptures did not solve the problem of division.

However, the Christian looks to such verses as Matthew 18:20 where Christ promised that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is in the midst of them. The Mormon does not understand the Christian concept of all believers constituting the church. In Ephesians 2:20-22 Paul points out that Christians “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Thus the question is not whether you are a member of the right denomination but are you trusting Christ’s atonement to make you right with God?

A Prophet?

Another area for discussion is the need for a prophet. You might ask the Mormon:

- *I’ve been told that LDS people believe God is continually giving new revelation to their prophet. How do you guard against false teachings?*
- *If your prophet gave a revelation that differed from church teachings in the past, how do you determine which to follow?*

Christians hold their ministers accountable to the Bible. (See Galatians 1:7-12 and 1 John 4:1) The early Christians compared Paul's teachings with the Old Testament in Acts 17:11-12. What is the standard for Mormons?

They may counter with something like: "God has promised he will never let the prophet lead us astray." Then why is there provision made in the *Doctrine and Covenants* Sec. 107:81-83 to replace a fallen prophet? Jesus warned about false prophets in Matthew 24:11 and 24.

Mormons point to Amos 3:7 to prove that God will always have a prophet leading the church. However, this is taking the verse out of context. God promised that he would not send judgment without giving a warning first through a prophet.

- *If only the president of the LDS Church can receive revelation for the church, why are the books of the New Testament written by different people?* Even Mormons agree Paul was never the head of the church. Shouldn't the apostles of Mormonism be as authoritative as Paul?
- *How many false prophecies could a prophet give and still be a true prophet?* In Deuteronomy 18:20-22 God declares that all his prophecies must come true. (See our sheet *How Do We Test a Prophet?* and *A Sample of Joseph Smith's False Prophecies.*)
- *If Mormons don't accept all the doctrines of their prophets and apostles, how does one know which teachings to accept and which ones to reject? They usually counter that you know through prayer.* But don't their apostles pray before preaching? How can a lay member expect to get greater discernment than those ordained by God? Can the Mormon cite an example of a doctrine that their prophet or apostles taught which they can openly reject?

If you bring up a doctrinal issue like Brigham Young's Adam-God doctrine they will often counter that that was Young's personal idea and not official doctrine even though he taught it from the pulpit. Then what constitutes "official doctrine"? The Mormon will usually counter that doctrine must be voted on by the church and canonized. Doesn't this establish that one of their prophets could give a false revelation? Then couldn't he lead the people astray?

Another question is why does the *Doctrine and Covenants* only have four sections by prophets other than Joseph Smith? Why has no revelation been added since 1978? Is God no longer giving revelation to their president as he did in the beginning?

If a Mormon says that their prophets still get revelations, ask where they are printed. Why don't they canonize them? Are they approaching a closed canon concept?

Need More Than Atonement?

Mormons will often say, "Why can't you accept us as Christians? We believe in Jesus as our savior." However, there are problems with both their definition of "saved" and their concept of Jesus.

Mormonism limits the result of the Fall, saying that it brought mortality but not a sinful nature as man is supposed to be a god in embryo. They limit the atonement, saying it brought resurrection (or immortality) to all, but to go on to "eternal life" or "exaltation" one must be a faithful Mormon thus adding works to grace. They believe they commit sin but don't understand man's basic sin-nature.

They make a distinction between being "saved" (resurrected to some level of heaven) and having "eternal life" (exaltation, godhood). A good example of the Mormon concept of the atonement is found in a parable by Apostle Boyd Packer in *Gospel Principles*, pp. 75-77, 1997 edition. According to his parable, Christ's atonement was like someone refinancing your huge debt. Your friend pays off the loan for you but you then must make payments to him. From this parable we see that Mormons do not see the atonement as a total payment for their sins, they must continue to make payments. Jesus has only refinanced the loan. Thus the atonement was necessary but did not fulfill all that was required for eternal life. Apostle Packer's story is helpful in contrasting the Mormon concept of the atonement with that of the Bible.

When discussing grace with them you could also ask about 2 Nephi 25:23, "by grace we are saved, after all we can do."

- *If grace only applies after all you can do, how do you know when you have done enough? Have you truly done ALL you could do? If not, then it would seem that grace would not apply. That is why a Christian rejoices in grace (unmerited favor) as presented in the Bible.*

We need to explain that good works are a result of grace, not a way to achieve it (Galatians 5:22-23 and Ephesians 2). One doesn't earn or pay for a gift. You will need to explain that grace is not a license to sin, that those who truly love God will want to please Him.

- *Since Mormonism teaches that almost everyone will be saved (resurrected) to some level in heaven, how do they reconcile that with Matt. 7:13-14? Jesus taught that only a few would gain heaven. They seem to have reversed the broad way and the narrow way.*

Temples and High Priests?

There are over a hundred LDS temples around the world in which they perform their baptisms for the dead, endowments and eternal marriage ceremonies for both the living and dead. A question to ask your Mormon friend is:

- *If a temple marriage is necessary for eternal life, why isn't it ever mentioned in the Bible (or the Book of Mormon)? Jesus taught that there would be no marriages in heaven (see Luke 20:34-35).*
- *Can you show me a verse in the Bible (or Book of Mormon) where baptisms or marriages were ever performed in the temple?*
- *Where in the Bible is the teaching that there are to be thousands of High Priests in the Christian church? Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament priesthood and is now the only High Priest in the Christian church. (See Hebrews 4:14; 7:26; 9:11 and our sheet *Bible Verses Relating to LDS Teachings on Temple Work*.)*

Eternal Life

Mormonism teaches that in order to gain eternal life (as opposed to merely entering heaven) one must be "worthy." It is achieved after a life of full activity in Mormonism, full tithing, temple marriage, etc. So a question to ask your friend is:

- *What is required to achieve eternal life in Mormonism?*
- *Have you met all of those requirements?*

- *If you died today do you know that you will have eternal life?*

Point out that the Christian has the assurance of eternal life through faith in Christ, not church activity (see 1 John 5:13).

Nature of God

Mormonism teaches a totally different concept of God. However, rather than trying to explain the trinity to them, I focus on the basic nature of God the Father. Joseph Smith taught that God was once a mortal on some other world, which was ruled by yet another deity. (See Smith's sermon on the nature of God in *History of the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 302-317 [King Follet Sermon], or *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 312, 342-354, 370-373.) Each god rose from mortality to immortality and earned the position of a god. He does not surpass the previous god, but is forever under his direction. It is sort of like an eternal pyramid system, or escalator, with each god answering to the one above him. If the Mormon denies this teaching ask him if he has read Smith's sermons on God. If Smith's doctrine of God is wrong he falls under the condemnation of Deuteronomy 13, a false prophet leading the people after a false god. (See our sheet *LDS View of God Contradicts the Bible*.) How do they reconcile Smith's doctrine of multiple gods with Isaiah 43:10-11 and Isaiah 44:8?

A Testimony?

The Mormon will often say that he knows the LDS Church is true from prayer and inner conviction. We need to point out that people all over the world have come up with different beliefs about God. Obviously sincerity and prayer are not enough to guard against false claims. That is why God has given us the Bible, so that we will have a standard measurement for truth claims. You might ask them:

- *If you were lost in the woods would you trust your feelings or use a compass?* Christians use the Bible to determine truth, not feelings.

We don't need to pray to know if we should rob a bank, or commit adultery, since God has already spoken on the issue. Thus we see that if someone claims a revelation contrary to what God has already spoken, we can know that it is a false teaching. Thus if Joseph Smith

taught anything different from the Bible, like plural gods, he should be rejected. (Galatians 1:8-9 and Deuteronomy 13)

While Christians value prayer and seek direction from God, this is not the Biblical method of testing a prophet. Every leader and doctrine must be examined in light of the Bible.

Conclusion

Remember that your life is already a witness to your LDS friends, one way or another. If they say you would make a good Mormon, take comfort. Your lifestyle is seen to be consistent with your claim to be a Christian, they just want to give you the rest of the gospel.

Challenge them to study the Bible (Acts 17:11-12). If Mormonism is a restoration of Christ's church, it will agree with what God has already revealed. Challenge them to think for themselves. Truth will stand up to investigation.

A Mormon quickly senses if you are talking from genuine concern and conviction, or if you just want an argument. Check your motives and attitude (see 2 Timothy 2:23-26 and Titus 3:2-9). As ambassadors for Christ we are to share His love and redemption.

“Always be full of joy in the Lord; . . . Let everyone see that you are unselfish and considerate in all you do.” (Philippians 4:4-5, Living Bible)

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV)

About the Author

Sandra Tanner, with her husband Jerald, have authored more than forty books on Mormonism including *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality*, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, and *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon*.

Sandra was raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church), and is the great-great-granddaughter of Brigham Young, the second president/prophet of the LDS Church. As a teenager she taught Sunday School, attended the dedication of the Los Angeles Temple, did baptisms for the dead, graduated from the LDS high school religious classes called “seminary” and when she entered college she enrolled in the LDS Institute of Religion program.

She became aware of problems in early LDS history while in high school, when her mother started to question and research the history of Mormonism. But it wasn't until she met her future husband, Jerald Tanner, also a fifth-generation Mormon, that she accepted the challenge to investigate Mormon history and doctrine.

A year after their 1959 marriage they both requested that their LDS Church membership be terminated. As new believers in Christ they rejected Joseph Smith's doctrines of multiple gods and temple rituals, even though they still held on to the Book of Mormon as a book of scripture. After a couple of years research into the claims of that book, they finally rejected all of Mormonism in the latter part of 1962, turning to just the Bible as their rule of faith.

Over the next decades they committed themselves to researching and writing on the claims of Mormonism with the goal of pointing their family and friends to Christ as taught in the Bible. In 1983 they set up as a non-profit organization, Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

Jerald died of complications associated with Alzheimer's disease in 2006 and Sandra retired in May of 2023. Many of their books, articles and interviews can be accessed through their web site, www.utlm.org.

