

Mormon Doctrine of God: A Christian Perspective

Dr. Pat Zukeran examines the Mormon doctrine of God from a Christian perspective. Is their view of God consistent with the biblical view?

Monotheism or Polytheism?

The Mormons consider themselves to be Christian, but many question this claim. In this article we will investigate the teaching of Mormonism regarding the doctrine of God and compare it with Biblical teaching.

Mormon doctrine is derived from four primary sources. The first is the Bible; the second are the sacred texts of Mormonism, the *Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The third comes from the writings of the founder of the church Joseph Smith, and the fourth is the writings of church leaders, especially the church presidents who are considered to be inspired prophets of God. In regard to the God of the Bible, Stephen Robinson, chairman of the Department of Ancient Scriptures at Brigham Young University, writes, "The Latter-day Saints (should) be considered worshipers of the one true God."[\[1\]](#) He also states, "The Latter-day Saints accept unequivocally all the biblical teachings on the nature of God."[\[2\]](#)

Christianity has taught monotheism from its foundation, the belief in the existence of one God. Mormonism believes in the existence of a plurality of gods. According to Mormonism, there are an infinite number of planets like earth in the universe, each with their god or gods who were once men who have evolved into godhood. Mormon theologian and Apostle Bruce McConkie states, "[A] plurality of gods exist . . . there is an infinite number of holy personages, drawn from worlds

without number, who have passed on to exaltation and are thus gods.”[\[3\]](#)

Joseph Smith wrote, “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 (the) people in it.”[\[4\]](#)

The *Pearl of Great Price* states in the Book of Abraham, “And they (the gods) said: let there be light and there was light. And they (the gods) comprehended the light, . . . and the gods called the light Day and the darkness they called Night. . . .” In these two chapters, the plural designation “gods” is used over fifty times.

Although they believe that numerous gods exist, Mormons consider themselves to be monotheists because they focus their worship exclusively on the Godhead of this earth. With this being the case, a more accurate description of Mormon practice is *henotheism*, a form of polytheism that stresses a central deity.

The Bible clearly teaches monotheism. This truth is taught in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Isaiah writes about God, “Before me there was no god formed, nor will there be one after me.” There was no god created before or any to come for there is only one God. Later he adds, “You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock: I know not one.” God knows of no other, not because God is limited in knowledge, but because there is no other like Him in existence.

Doctrine of the Trinity

Christians and Mormons share many similar theological terms. We both refer to God, salvation, and heaven. However, the words often have radically different meanings. Such is the case with the doctrine of the Trinity. Biblical Christianity

teaches there is one God eternally coexisting in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As we will see, the Mormon view of the Godhead is quite different.

The Mormons reject the traditional Christian view of the Trinity as being in error. Joseph Smith wrote,

Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God. I say that is a strange God [anyhow]—three in one and one in three. . . It is curious organization All are crammed into one God according to sectarianism (Christian faith). It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God—he would be a giant or a monster. (Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 372)

Church president James Talmage stated, “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are as distinct in persons and individualities as are any three personages in mortality.”[\[5\]](#)

Mormons believe that there are an infinite number of planets, each with their own god or gods. On this earth, there are three separate gods, God the Father or Elohim, Jehovah or Jesus the son, and the Holy Ghost who make up the Godhead. Instead of Trinitarian, *tritheistic* would be a better word to describe Mormon belief. Mormon theologian Bruce McConkie states, “There are three Gods— the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”[\[6\]](#) He further explains that, “[T]hree separate personages—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost comprise the Godhead. As each of these persons is a god, it is evident, from this standpoint alone, that a plurality of gods exists. To us, speaking in the proper finite sense, these three are the only gods we worship.”[\[7\]](#)

Jesus is believed by Mormons to be the literal offspring of the Father. The Mormon Church teaches that “Jesus Christ is the son of Elohim both as (a) spiritual and bodily offspring;

that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed his mission in the flesh. . . .”{8}

The Bible teaches that there is only one true God, not three separate gods. Deuteronomy 6:4 states, “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” God has revealed Himself in three coeternal and coequal persons of the same substance or essence, however, distinct in subsistence. The Bible reveals that all three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—have the attributes of deity. All three have existed for eternity, took part in creation, and play a role in salvation. The whole, undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three Persons.{9}

God Was Once a Man

As we discussed earlier, Mormon theology teaches that there is a plurality of gods. All gods were once mortal men on other planets who, through obedience to the commands of their God, attained exaltation or godhood. All Mormon men have the potential of attaining godhood as well. God’s progression from man to God is clearly stated throughout Mormon literature. Joseph Smith wrote:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . 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. . . . He was once a man like us; yea that God himself, the Father dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did. . . .{10}

Brigham Young, the second president taught “[T]hat God the Father was once a man on another planet who ‘passed the ordeal we are now passing through. . . .’”{11} The *Doctrine and Covenants* states, “God is a glorified and perfected man, a

personage of flesh and bones. Inside his tangible body is an eternal spirit.” (130:22)

Jesus is believed to have been a mortal man who attained godhood and showed that all men can do the same. The goal of every Mormon man is to achieve exaltation to godhood. Bruce McConkie states, “That exaltation which the saints of all ages have so devoutly sought is godhood itself.”[{12}](#) Joseph Smith exhorted all Mormon men to strive for this goal. He stated,

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, the same as all gods have done before you. . . .[{13}](#)

The Mormon Church teaches that if a couple marries according to Mormon ceremony, and each lives an obedient life, they may attain godhood at the resurrection. The *Doctrine and Covenants* teaches,

[Y]e shall come forth in the first resurrection; . . . and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths . . . (and you) shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to (their) exaltation.” (132)

The passage concludes, “Then they shall be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting because they continue. . . . Then they shall be gods because they have all power, and the angels are subject to them.” (132:20)

The Bible teaches that God has always been God. Psalm 90 states, “From everlasting to everlasting you are God.” God did not evolve from mortal man. Isaiah 43 reveals, “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.” This verse destroys any hope of any man thinking he may become a god.

Celestial Parenthood

In Mormon theology, there are three levels of heaven, terrestrial, tellestial, and celestial. It teaches that almost everyone will make it to the first level, terrestrial, but Mormons seek entrance to celestial heaven, because there they are exalted to godhood. Once a man is exalted to godhood, he and his wife will reproduce offspring for eternity. These spirit children will in turn inhabit physical bodies and have the opportunity to become gods as well. This privilege is reserved for those who go through the sacred marriage ceremony in the Temple and live in obedience to Mormon teachings.

As we discussed previously, the Mormon book *Doctrine and Covenants* teaches that Mormons who marry within the context of the church, and remain obedient, shall be resurrected together. They shall then inherit thrones and kingdoms and are then declared gods because they will then rule together for eternity. Church president James Talmage adds, “[W]e are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring . . . and the spirits born to them in the eternal worlds will pass in due sequence through the several stages or estates by which the glorified parents have attained exaltation.”[\[14\]](#)

God the Father is, therefore, believed to be married to God the Mother, and together they are producing spirit children. Bruce McConkie states, “An exalted and glorified man of holiness could not be a Father unless a woman of like glory, perfection, and holiness was associated with him as a Mother. The begetting of children makes a man a father and a woman a mother whether we are dealing with man in his mortal or immortal state.”[\[15\]](#)

All men and women are thus the offspring of this heavenly union. James Talmage wrote, “God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title ‘Elohim,’ is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of the spirits

of the human race.”{16}

The Bible teaches that God the Father is not married. Isaiah 46:9 states, “I am God, and there is no other; I am God; and there is none like me.” The Bible teaches that men and women who receive Christ as their savior will be glorified and live eternally in the presence of God. However, they will never be equal to God, nor will they be married. If marriage were essential to attain exaltation, it seems strange that Paul would write in 1 Corinthians 7, “It is good for a man not to marry.” When Jesus was questioned about the state of marriage in eternity he said, “When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, they will be like the angels in heaven.” The covenant of marriage is for our earthly existence only. The Bible does not teach a doctrine of celestial parenthood.

God is a Physical Being

Christianity teaches that God is immaterial. Mormonism teaches that God has a physical body. The Mormon *Doctrine and Covenants* teaches, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s, the Son also. . . .”{17} Brigham Young wrote, “We cannot believe for a moment that God is destitute of body, parts, passions, or attributes.”{18}

Although John 4:24 clearly teaches that God is spirit, Mormons like Bruce McConkie teach that this is a mistranslation of the text. He writes:

False creeds teach that God is a spirit essence that fills the immensity of space. . . . In a vain attempt to support this doctrine, formulated by councils in the early days of the great apostasy, it is common for apologists to point to the statement in the KJV Bible, which says, “God is a Spirit.” The fact is that this passage is mistranslated: instead the correct statement, quoted in context reads: “For unto such hath God promised his Spirit. And they who worship

him, must worship in spirit and in truth.”{19}

However, there is no justification for McConkie’s translation. The KJV translation of “God is a spirit” is misleading; modern translators are more accurate rendering the passage “God is spirit.” The Greek construction and word order place the emphasis on the essential character of God; thus the essence of true worship must be on God’s terms and in accord with his nature.{20} Jesus further taught in Luke 24:36-43, “[A] spirit does not have flesh and bones.” 1 Timothy 1:17 states, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.” God is invisible because He is immaterial. 1 John 4:12 and John 1:18 tell us that no one has seen God. The second of the Ten Commandments forbids anyone from making an image of God, partially because nothing physical could accurately reflect God, who is immaterial. If God created the universe, as the Bible teaches, He could not be a physical being.

Scripture often uses anthropomorphic language, attributing human characteristics to God to help describe God’s activities. Psalm 17 pleads, “Keep me (Lord) as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings.” Mormons have used this kind of language to prove that God has a physical body. In doing so they ignore the use of figurative language. God no more has a physical eye than He has wings and feathers.

God also revealed Himself in temporary physical forms that men could understand called theophanies. Examples are the burning bush, the fiery cloud in Exodus, and the unique incarnation of Christ. God the Son humbled Himself and took on human form. He was not a pre-existent spirit-being, waiting for a body, as the Mormons teach. John 1 reveals that the Son was God from eternity and became a man to redeem humanity. We must conclude, based on our study of the doctrine of God, that Mormonism and traditional Christianity are indeed two different religions.

Notes

1. Stephen Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 65; quoted in John Ankerberg, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Mormonism*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1992), 99.
2. Ibid., 103.
3. Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1991), 576-577.
4. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 349; quoted in Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1997), 220.
5. James Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book Company, 1984), 37.
6. McConkie, 317.
7. McConkie, 576.
8. Talmage, 421.
9. Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988), 54.
10. Smith, 321.
11. Brigham Young, *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 29.
12. McConkie, 321.
13. Smith, p. 345-347. Also quoted in McConkie, 321.
14. Talmage, 426.
15. McConkie, 516.
16. Talmage, 421.
17. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:22.
- 18, Young, 29.
19. McConkie, 218.
20. *Expositors Bible Commentary*.

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Mormon Beliefs about Prophecy, Heaven, and Celestial Marriage

Russ Wise demonstrates some ways in which Mormonism cannot be true because of false prophecies. He also examines their beliefs about three levels of heaven, and the concept of being married for eternity, even though scripture contradicts these doctrines.

The Book of Mormon: A Superior Revelation or a Hoax?

Missionaries for the Mormon Church have converted millions of people to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by convincing them that the Book of Mormon is true and superior to the Bible.

The Book of Mormon claims to be history of “the period from 600 BC to 421 AD during which the Nephite, Lamanite, and Mulekite civilizations flourished.”[\[1\]](#) It is also believed by the Mormon Church that these civilizations were descendants of Lehi, a Jew who led a colony of people from Jerusalem to the Americas in 600 BC.

The Nephite prophet Mormon and his son Moroni played major roles in bringing the lost story of these civilizations to light. War broke out among the descendants of Lehi, and as they were about to annihilate one another, Mormon wrote their history on golden plates and hid them in the hill Cumorah in New York state.

According to Bruce R. McConkie, a Mormon scholar, the Book of Mormon has three purposes:

- *To bear record of Christ and clarify his Divine Sonship and*

mission, proving that he is the Redeemer and Savior;

- To teach the doctrines of the gospel in such a perfect way that the plan of salvation will be clearly revealed;*
- To stand as a witness that Joseph Smith was the Lord's anointed through whom the latter-day work of restoration would be accomplished.*[\[2\]](#) *(According to the Mormon Church, Christianity was corrupted after the death of the last apostle and Joseph Smith was anointed by God to restore the true church.)*

Referring to the Book of Mormon, the Mormon apostle Orson Pratt, said: "This book must be either true or false. If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God.... If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked...impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions." [\[3\]](#)

It is imperative that we recognize the Book of Mormon for what it is and challenge those who continue to perpetuate the false idea that it is true. In order for the Book of Mormon to be accepted as divine truth, the Bible must be discredited.

The book of 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon says: "Because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words." [\[4\]](#) Joseph Smith said, "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." [\[5\]](#)

The underlying problem with the Book of Mormon is that there is absolutely no objective, external evidence for much of the information found in the book. And the information that is trustworthy was plagiarized right out of the King James Bible. Beyond the fact that the Book of Mormon cannot be verified externally, the potential convert is told that the Smithsonian Institution uses the Book of Mormon to aid its archaeological

work. However, in a letter referring to this Mormon claim, the Smithsonian Institution Department of Anthropology states: "The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archaeologists see no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book." [\[6\]](#)

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President of the Church, has unintentionally summarized my thoughts about the Book of Mormon exactly as he stated, "If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, for the doctrines of an impostor cannot be made to harmonize in all particulars with divine truth. If his claims and declarations were built upon fraud and deceit, there would appear many errors and contradictions which would be easy to detect." [\[7\]](#)

It is interesting to note that there have been close to four thousand corrections made in the Book of Mormon to date. What an epitaph for a "perfect" book of divine teaching.

Prophecies That Didn't Come True

Mormon writers have influenced millions of people over the years and have been instrumental in developing less than truthful statements concerning the church. These statements, or prophecies, must be looked at carefully, then refuted when they miss the mark of legitimacy.

It is imperative that we understand the biblical teaching regarding a prophet. Deuteronomy 18:20-22 says:

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord,

if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. . .”{8}

If the prophecy does not come to pass, the scripture is plain in stating that the individual is not a prophet of God and that he should be put to death. There is no acceptable average of correctness other than 100% correct, 100% of the time. Anything less had grave consequences.

The president of the Mormon Church is known as the “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator” of the church. It is their duty to divine the word of God, to be His mouthpiece.

Perhaps the most embarrassing prophecy that did not come to pass is the prophecy regarding the temple in Zion. The Doctrine and Covenants, a later book of revelations given by Joseph Smith, says this about the temple:

“Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place... For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord. . .”{9}

This prophecy was in reference to Jackson County, Missouri. It is interesting to note that this prophecy was given in September of 1832 and that there has not been a temple built as of this date nor within the generation of those living in 1832.

Another prophecy related to the temple in Zion is found in Doctrine and Covenants 97:19. It states: “And the nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there. . .”

Once again it is noteworthy that a temple was not built in

Missouri, but that a temple WAS built in Salt Lake City. If the prophecy is true, Salt Lake City cannot be Zion. However, if Salt Lake City is indeed Zion, the prophecy is utterly false.

On another occasion, February 14, 1835, Joseph Smith said that “it was the will of God that those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh even fifty-six years should wind up the scene.”[\[10\]](#) The truth regarding this prophecy that Jesus would return in 56 years is obvious to any living today. His bride is yet waiting His return after one hundred and fifty-five years.

The fact that these and other prophecies of Joseph Smith were not fulfilled leads us to only one conclusion in light of Deuteronomy 18:20-22. Joseph Smith was indeed a false prophet.

The Great Restoration or the Great Fabrication?

The Book of Mormon tells us that many of the truths of the early church were lost when the church fell into apostasy. Joseph Smith taught that after the death of Jesus Christ and the apostles, there was a total apostasy. They further teach that the churches of our day do not represent Christ and have, in fact, done away with many of the original truths of the early church. The Book of Mormon states, “they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.”[\[11\]](#)

One major aspect of the restoration which Joseph Smith was called to establish was that of the priesthoods—both the Aaronic and the Melchizedek.

The Mormon Missionary Handbook indicates that the only ones

who have the authority to baptize new believers are those who hold the Priesthood in the Mormon Church. However, when one takes a critical look, it is obvious that the concept of reintroducing the priesthods into the church is an unbiblical endeavor.

This is of primary importance when one realizes that the structure of the Mormon Church is based on the revelation of Joseph Smith.[{12}](#) According to the past president of the Mormon Church, Spencer W. Kimball, "The priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things pertaining to the salvation of men. It is the means whereby the Lord acts through men to save souls. Without this priesthood power, men are lost."[{13}](#) Bishop H. Burke Peterson declared that the effectiveness of the priest's authority, or "the power that comes through that authority—depends on the patterns of our lives; it depends on our righteousness."[{14}](#) It is interesting to note that the priest's power to do the will of God is not given by the Holy Spirit but comes from one's personal righteousness.

David Witmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, had this to say about the Priesthoods: "This matter of 'Priesthood,' since the days of Sidney Rigdon, has been the great hobby and stumbling-block of the Latter- Day Saints. Priesthood means authority; and authority is the word we should use. I do not think the word priesthood is mentioned in the New Covenant of the Book of Mormon."[{15}](#) Witmer goes on to say that it was in fact Sydney Rigdon who gave Joseph Smith the idea of reintroducing the Priesthoods. The Mormon Church had been operating for two full years before the establishing of this new line of authority. About two thousand followers were baptized into the church and confirmed without the advantage of a recognized priest.

David Witmer addresses his remarks to Joseph Smith as he continues his address to all believers in Christ by saying, "You have changed the revelations from the way they were first

given and as they are today in the Book of Commandments.... You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood.... You have altered the revelations to support you in going beyond the plain teachings of Christ in the new covenant part of the Book of Mormon.”{16}

Not only does Joseph Smith have problems with his revelation concerning the priesthoods with the authority of the Book of Mormon and David Witmer, but the Bible does not help him either.

It is apparent that when young Joseph was plagiarizing the Bible that he did not look very closely at the book of Hebrews. If he had, he might have realized that God had sent His Son to be the eternal High Priest.

Three Chances at Heaven

Joseph Smith was a man of revelation. Perhaps the most welcome revelations from young Joseph were his new teachings about salvation. The idea that all people would receive a measure of salvation was widely received by the Mormon Church.

As well, his teaching regarding the celestial kingdom found wide acceptance. According to Bruce R. McConkie, author of Mormon Doctrine, “Heaven is the celestial Kingdom of God.”{17} LeGrand Richards, a presiding bishop of the Mormon Church, says that we have “at least five places to which we may go after death.”{18} He says we “have three heavens, paradise, and the hell so often spoken of in the scriptures. . . .”{19} Joseph Smith taught that “in the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees.”{20} However, according to the Holy Bible, Joseph’s teaching about man’s disposition after death is anything but scriptural.

The revelation or “The Vision,” as it came to be known, is found in the Doctrine and Covenants and was given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on February 16, 1832.{21} This

revelation was given by Jesus [{vs. 14}](#) to those individuals who will be in the first resurrection of the Firstborn. The Firstborn are those who held the priesthood.

The Celestial Kingdom is made up of three levels or degrees of heaven. The first, or the lower level of heaven, is known as the telestial glory. This degree of heaven is held for those “who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus,”[{22}](#) but who, nevertheless, did not deny the Holy Spirit. The Telestial Kingdom is for those who chose wickedness over godliness.

The second degree of heaven is the terrestrial glory. This level is held for those “who, though honorable, failed to comply with the requirements for exaltation, were blinded by the craftiness of men and unable to receive and obey the higher laws of God.”[{23}](#) Likewise, it is for those who rejected Christ in mortal life but accepted Him afterwards.[{24}](#)

The third, or the highest level, of heaven is that of the celestial. This degree is held for those who have received the Temple ordinances. They have been married in the Temple for all time and eternity and they are gods.[{25}](#) According to James E. Talmage, they “have striven to obey all the divine commandments,. . . have accepted the testimony of Christ, obeyed ‘the laws and ordinances of the Gospel,’ and received the Holy Spirit.”[{26}](#) Therefore, they are entitled to the highest glory.

The remaining options for the individual who does not qualify for the celestial glories are paradise and perdition, for the Latter-day Saints do not believe in a hell. Joseph Smith put it this way: “There is no hell. All will find a measure of salvation.”[{27}](#)

At death the individual’s spirit goes either to paradise to later be judged and offered one of the three degrees of

heaven, or his spirit is sent to perdition where it is given a chance to repent and thus gain a higher heavenly option.

Perdition, commonly known as Spirit-Prison Hell, is a temporary state even though it lasts more than a thousand years. It is interesting to note that the Book of Mormon does not seem to agree with the Doctrine and Covenants where it clearly states there is no second chance for repentance after death. Alma 34:32 states,

“For behold this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God...Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end...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.” [\[28\]](#)

Once again it becomes evident that Joseph Smith changed his mind regarding another key revelation, since the teaching of the Bible does not correspond to the changeableness of the Mormon prophet. We must conclude that Mormonism completely lacks of any biblical basis and is truly another gospel.

Celestial Marriage: Fact or Fiction?

Eternal Marriage is essential for exaltation. A key element of Mormon doctrine and the foundation for exaltation in the highest heaven is celestial marriage. Exaltation is the primary goal for each Mormon to achieve. To understand the Latter-Day Saints' desire to enter into an eternal marriage it is important to understand the term “exaltation.”

Exaltation, according to an official Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints publication, “is eternal life, the kind of life that God lives. He lives in great glory. He is perfect. He possesses all knowledge and all wisdom. He is the father of

spirit children. He is a creator. We can become gods like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation.”{29}

We find in the Book of Moses in Mormon scriptures God saying, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”{30}—in other words, to help man and woman become gods and goddesses in the celestial kingdom.

“An eternal marriage must be performed by one who holds the sealing powers and authority”{31}—one who holds the priesthood authority. The marriage “must also be done in the proper place. The proper place is in one of the holy temples of our Lord. The temple is the only place this holy ordinance can be performed.”{32} Mormons believe that if they are married by any other authority the marriage is for this life only and therefore negates their opportunity for celestial exaltation.

William Clayton, Hyrum Smith’s clerk, was present when Joseph Smith first announced the revelation regarding plural and celestial marriage. Clayton wrote that from Joseph he “learned that the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on earth, and that without obedience to that principle no man can ever attain to the fullness of exaltation in celestial glory.”{33}

This revelation was first given publicly at Nauvoo, Illinois, July 12, 1843. In May of that year Joseph revealed that “In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; and if he does not, he cannot obtain it.”{34} Joseph goes on to reveal that “if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned.”{35}

It has already been pointed out that the individual will receive a measure of salvation regardless of his disposition. The recurring question that remains is, Why should I subject myself to the regimen of the church (ie. the hassles) if I

will receive salvation anyway? We find the answer further in the revelation. "We must be obedient to every covenant that we make in the temple of the Lord. He (God) has said that if we are true and faithful we shall pass by the angels to our exaltation. We will become gods." [\[36\]](#) The Mormon hopes to become a god himself but only if he is in complete compliance with the church.

It is noteworthy that the teaching that reveals the foundation for celestial marriage [{exaltation}](#) is not to be found in the Book of Mormon, the "most correct" of any book on earth. [\[37\]](#) Therefore, it seems that the motivation for entering into celestial marriage is not based on fact but on the possibility of being a god or a goddess.

The teachings of the Mormon church often go unchallenged and many in the church, along with a growing number outside its doors believe it to be a Christian institution. Those in the church have in many cases been "fellowshipped"; that is, they have been catered to for the specific reason of gaining their membership in the church. Often these members have not clearly discerned the doctrine of the church.

Those outside the Mormon Church see the good works of its members and because of their lack of understanding of Christian teaching and their acute lack of knowledge regarding Mormon sources, they tend to think that the Mormon church is as Christian as the Baptists, Methodists and the Presbyterians.

Brigham Young, second President of the Mormon Church, challenged the world to test the teachings of the Latter-Day Saints. This essay is an answer to his challenge.

Notes

1. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1979), 98.
2. Ibid., 98-99.

3. Orson Pratt, *Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* (Liverpool, 1851), 1-2.
4. Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 29:10 (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982).
5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 194. See also, *The History of the Church* (Vol. 4, November 28, 1841), 461.
6. Letter from the Smithsonian Institution (SIL-76, Summer 1979).
7. *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 188.
8. The Holy Bible, New King James Version, Deuteronomy 18:20-22) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982).
9. Doctrine and Covenants 84:1-5 (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968). See also verse 31.
10. *The History of the Church*, Vol. 2 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Co., 2nd ed. revised, 1976), 182.
11. *The Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 13:26.
12. Joseph Smith, *Pearl of Great Price* 2:68-73 (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968).
13. "The Example of Abraham," *Ensign* (June 1975):3. See also Gospel Principles, First Quorum of the Seventy, (1986), 103.
14. "Priesthood Authority and Power," *Ensign* (May 1976), 33.
15. David Witmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 64.
16. Ibid., 49.
17. McConkie, 348.
18. LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Co., 1950), 263.
19. Ibid.
20. McConkie, 348.
21. Doctrine and Covenants, 76:11-119.
22. Ibid., 76:82.
23. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976), 92.
24. Doctrine and Covenants, 76:73-74.
25. Doctrines and Covenants, 76:58.

26. Talmage, 91.
27. John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker After Truth, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1951) 177-78.
28. Book of Mormon, Alma 34:32.
29. *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, revised 1986), 289.
30. Ibid., 290. The Doctrine and Covenants, Moses 1:39.
31. *Gospel Principles*, 233.
32. Ibid.
33. Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1977), 345.
34. Doctrine and Covenants 131:1-3.
35. Ibid., 132:4.
36. *Gospel Principles*, 234. See also Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20 and the Mormon publication by Oscar W. McConkie, Jr., *God and Man* (The Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1963), 5.
37. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 194.

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