

“YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD:” SATAN’S LIE FROM THE GARDEN TO UTAH

BY

JACOB M. HEYN

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PROF. JOHN BRENNER, ADVISOR

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

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## ABSTRACT

Satan's lies have corrupted mankind since the fall into sin. In recent years, his corruption has begun influencing people to use the Bible as the basis of their Scripture, but downplay its reliability. One such corruption has come in the form of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Their core belief is that one day they could become gods. Throughout their lives, they need to be good Mormons so that they might receive this exaltation, becoming gods. They have to be absolutely perfect every step of the way. This causes major stress for them which gives us the perfect opportunity to preach the truth of God's Word to them and save them from the grip of Satan. This paper aims to show how we can know that Mormons do believe that they are able to become gods and how we can preach God's truth to them.

## INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, everything was perfect. There was nothing wrong with the world. Everyone and everything was at peace. The first two people, Adam and Eve, were perfect. There was no need for anything. God gave them only one command. That command was to not eat from one tree in the garden.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:1-5, LDS-KJV<sup>1</sup>)

Satan in the form of a serpent has brought ruin, destruction, death, and sin into the once-perfect world. Because Adam and Eve fell for the devil lie, the rest of humanity became sinful. And that one lie that started in the garden continued to pop up throughout history.

In ancient Rome, the line rears its head again in the Roman empire. People worship the emperor as a god going so far as to believe that he could become a god and join the ranks of the guards they already were shipped. In ancient Egypt, the pharaohs were considered the gun to Osiris. They worshiped him. In Greek mythology, heroes would become gods. In India, Hinduism began teaching something very similar. It taught that one could reach nirvana, the state of being one with the gods entering into an existence like the gods. All these religious ideas sprout from the same lie that Satan told Adam and Eve in the garden. That we could be like God.

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1. Latter-Day Saints King James Version is the version that will be used throughout this paper. There is no difference between this version and the regular KJV, except that the footnotes include references to a *Topical Guide* and occasionally to the Joseph Smith Translation (JST).

But all these religions exist outside of the Bible. Could Satan's lies from the garden find their way into the Christian Church?

In New York in 1823, a young man by the name of Joseph Smith Jr had his second vision. His first vision was of God and Christ warning him not to join any of the churches that existed at that time. In this second vision, Moroni, a messenger from God, told Joseph Smith to look for golden plates, which would become the *Book of Mormon*. Moroni also began quoting passages from the Bible with a few changes. Soon Joseph Smith had more visions, one including John the Baptist. From this Joseph Smith founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons.<sup>2</sup> As the early Mormon Church began to grow, Joseph Smith continued to have more and more visions and revelations. One such vision, recorded in *Doctrine and Covenants* 132, includes this line, "Then shall they be gods."<sup>3</sup> Does this mean that Mormons teach that they will become gods? Churchofjesuschrist.org, the official website for the Mormon Church, addresses this very question. They say,

***Do Latter-day Saints believe they can become "gods"?***

Latter-day Saints believe that is God's purpose to exalt us to become like Him. But this teaching is often misrepresented by those who caricature the faith. The Latter-day Saint belief is no different than the biblical teaching, which states, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:16-17).<sup>4</sup>

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2. For this point on, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be called Mormons for succinctness. Also despite the misconception that Mormons do not like to be called Mormons, the opposite is true. Joseph F. Smith, quoted in the *Book of Mormon Student Manual*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, 126.

3. Smith, Joseph et al. *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Containing the Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, with Some Additions by His Successors in the Presidency of the Church*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013, 132:20.

4. "Frequently Asked Questions About Latter-Day Saints." *Newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org*, September 16, 2010. <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/frequently-asked-questions>.

They deny that what they teach is that they will become gods. Instead, they say that they will be exalted to be like God. What does that mean exactly? Despite what the Mormon Church wants people to believe about them, the Mormon Church definitively teaches that if they perfectly follow the commands of God as laid out in the Bible and other Mormon Scriptures, they will be exalted to godhood. As such, we, moved by compassion and love for Mormons, preach the truth of God's Word to them so that they might be saved, not by their own works, but by the works of Christ from the hands of Satan.

## PART 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

For what reason should this essay be written? Why have a paper which focuses on the Mormon Church when there is a book, which is referenced numerous times in this paper, that does a better more detailed job? The Mormon Church in 2019 began a revitalization of their teaching curriculum for families, for Sunday School, for their seminaries<sup>5</sup>, and for mission work. They are creating a curriculum, called “Come Follow Me,” concerning each of their Scriptures, getting their people to dig deeper into their false doctrines. This paper is written to renew the desire to reach out to these people to rip them from the grip of Satan with the truth of the gospel.

This urgency to preach the gospel to Mormons can be seen in all Lutheran pastors who regularly interact with Mormons. Their hearts cannot help but yearn to help them. Mark J. Cares (1998) is exemplary of this. He lays out clearly and in a detailed manner the beliefs of the Mormons in regards to exaltation or the ascent to godhood. He also lays out an evangelism method that he has found useful when talking with Mormons. It teaches the truth of the gospel to Mormons and shows how to keep them in the Church.

However, Mark J. Cares is a Lutheran. How can we see that this is actually what Mormons teach? The Mormons use three main books to get their doctrines: *The Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *Doctrine and Covenants*. These three books along with the Bible make up the doctrine of the Mormon Church. Many books have been written to sum up the doctrines found in these books which are used in this paper. From all these books, none is as important as the magazine, *Ensign*. *Ensign* contains papers and reports given by different

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5. Mormon seminaries are sort of equivalent to Catechism classes, but they don't stop at 8th grade. They are made for high school students to teach them Mormon doctrine.

Mormon leaders. Most importantly, on occasion, the President of the Mormon Church will have a paper that is considered the inspired word of God. More doctrinal and modern thoughts are contained in these articles.

While these two sections of books are the most important for this paper on the doctrinal issue of the exaltation found in Mormon doctrine, it is just as important to study the reasons why people have joined the Mormon Church. Edwin Scott Gaustad (1966) gives an overview of the entire history of America in regards to religion. In his book, he shows how Mormonism was founded during the time of the Second Great Awakening. While his book only gives us a brief view of the founding of Mormonism and the events surrounding its founding, Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling focus on Mormonism in particular. They show how Mormonism was founded in a more in-depth and detailed manner.

The Mormon religion is a sad religion that has its members trapped in a high-stress work-oriented religion that leads only to eternity in hell disguised as a Christian religion, though, they are not even remotely Christian. The whole religion is centered on the idea that they can become gods. These books as well as many others not mentioned will help show how Mormonism does in fact teach its members that they can become gods, just like Satan said in the Bible, and show us how we can evangelize to them and save them from death and hell through the truth of the gospel.



## PART 2: THE PLAN OF SALVATION

To be able to address the false teaching of exaltation, one must know and understand exactly what the Mormons believe in regards to exaltation or the plan of salvation. The plan of salvation is broken up into three stages: pre-mortality, mortality, and post-mortality.

### **Pre-mortality**

Pre-mortality began before anyone was born. At that time, there were Heavenly Father, the other gods<sup>6</sup>, and his spirit children. Heavenly Father is the God of this earth.<sup>7</sup> He is the creator of everything in our world, just as it is written in Gen 1. The spirit children are the most important part of the plan of salvation. The spirit children are the literal children of God. These spirit children include Jesus, Lucifer, Demons, and all of humanity.<sup>8</sup> We are God's spirit children. Now, Heavenly Father loved us very much and wanted us to be like him.

Our Heavenly Father knew we could not progress beyond a certain point unless we left Him for a time. He wanted us to develop the godlike qualities that He has. To do this, we needed to leave our premortal home to be tested and to gain experience. Our spirits needed to be clothed with physical bodies. We would need to leave our physical bodies at death and reunite with them in the Resurrection. Then we would receive immortal bodies like that of our Heavenly Father. If we passed our tests, we would receive the fulness of joy that our Heavenly Father has received.<sup>9</sup>

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6. These other gods are not important to the plan of salvation. They are background participants while Heavenly Father is the God at the forefront. (Smith, Joseph. *The Pearl of Great Price: A Selection from the Revelations, Translations, And Narrations of Joseph Smith First Prophet, Seer, and Revelator to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013, Abraham 4:26.)

7. Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 2:1, Abraham 4:1 (footnote a).

8. Smith, *Doctrines and Covenants*, 76:18–49

9. *Gospel Principles. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009, Chapter 2, Section 3. (For the rest of the essay, chapters and sections will be given as follows: 2:3)

Therefore, a plan needed to be made so that we could achieve that goal. Two plans were offered. One came from Lucifer and the other from Jesus.<sup>10</sup> Lucifer said, “Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.”<sup>11</sup> Jesus, on the other hand, said, “Father, they will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”<sup>12</sup> In *The Pearl of Great Price*, Abraham 3:25–6, God makes clear what his will is.

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; and they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

The will of God is that his children obey him and do all the things he tells them to do, both in pre-mortality and mortality. This was what Jesus wanted to do for us. He came to earth to be our example and to teach us what we needed to do to inherit our celestial home.<sup>13</sup> Heavenly Father chose Jesus to be our Savior. Lucifer was upset by this and rebelled against God with one-third of the spirit children. They were defeated and Lucifer became Satan. The spirit children who fought with Satan became the demons and were not allowed to continue into the next part of the plan of salvation, mortality.<sup>14</sup>

### **Mortality**

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10. Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 4:1–2.

11. Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 4:1.

12. Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 4:2.

13. Gospel Principles, 3:4.

14. “Satan.” *Gospel Topics. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

Those who were in the other two-thirds<sup>15</sup> who followed Jesus were given physical bodies here on earth. Their journey to earn their exaltation had begun. Adam and Eve, chosen to be the first humans on earth, were created and the human race began. Jesus later came to fulfill his role as the Savior.

And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus did not come to take away all sins, but just the sin from the fall so that man would be able to work his way into the exaltation that Heavenly Father wants them to have. It was now time for them to put the plan of salvation into practice. For their part, they had to do four things to earn their eternal salvation. They have to have children<sup>17</sup>, obey the First Principles and Ordinances<sup>18</sup>, prove their worthiness<sup>19</sup>, and, most importantly, complete Temple Ordinances and Temple Work.<sup>20</sup>

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15. An important note about this is that some of these people had not been good Mormons. These people, when they received bodies, became the African race. (Smith, Joseph Fielding, and Bruce R. McConkie. *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1999, 61, 65–6.) They were not allowed to be a part of the priesthood until 1978. (Smith, *Doctrines and Covenants*, Official Declaration 2.)

16. Smith, Joseph. *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013, 2 Nephi 2:26.

17. Hinckley, Gordon B. “The Family Proclamation.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, September 23, 1995.

18. “Ordinances.” *Gospel Topics. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

19 “Temples.” *Gospel Topics. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

20. “Ordinances.”

## Having Children

When God created Adam and Eve, he gave them this command: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). He also commanded them, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16–7).

When Satan comes and tempts Adam and Eve with the fruit of this tree, Adam had to choose between these two commands.

Adam found himself in a position that impelled him to disobey one of the requirements of God. He and his wife had been commanded to multiply and replenish the earth. Adam was still immortal; Eve had come under the penalty of mortality; and in such dissimilar conditions, the two could not remain together, and therefore could not fulfill the Divine requirement. On the other hand, Adam would be disobeying another command by yielding to his wife's request. He deliberately and wisely decided to stand by the first and greater commandment; and, therefore, with a full comprehension of the nature of his act, he also partook of the fruit that grew on the Tree of Knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

Adam's fall is not seen as a bad thing in Mormonism, rather it is seen as a noble thing Adam did so that the plan of salvation might take place. It was also important for the rest of the spirit children of God.

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. None of these privileges would have been ours had Adam and Eve remained in the garden.<sup>22</sup>

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21. Talmage, James E. *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. The Project Gutenberg. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982, 65.

22. Gospel Principles, 6:4.

Adam and Eve had to sin so that they might be able to have children and, by having children, the rest of God's children could receive physical bodies.

This command that God gave to Adam and Eve was not just meant for them. Jolie Hales, maker of "What Mormons Believe," says,

Mormons believe that that commandment was not just for Adam and Eve but also for mankind so for all husbands and wives we believe that they are commanded to multiply and replenish the earth which means to have children because remember since Mormons believe that we're spirits before being born in this earth there are still spirits waiting for an opportunity to come to a family and be born on this earth.<sup>23</sup>

They want to have as many children as possible because they want their spirit brothers and sisters, who are waiting on physical bodies, to receive the opportunity to earn their exaltation. Without physical bodies, they will not be able to go through the necessary steps to earn their salvation, to do their part of the plan of salvation.

### First Principles and Ordinances

The First Principles and Ordinances are broken up into four parts which can be summed up as becoming a Mormon. They are: "first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; four, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>24</sup> These four parts sound simple enough, but carry a lot of meaning for the Mormons.

The first of these First Principles and Ordinances is "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>25</sup> In *Gospel Principles*, this faith is defined as follows, "To have faith in Jesus Christ means to have such trust in Him that we obey whatever He commands. As we place our faith in Jesus Christ,

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23. "What Mormons Believe: Families," What Mormons Believe, September 23, 2013, 3:16–3:39.

24. Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Articles of Faith 1:4.

25. Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Articles of Faith 1:4.

becoming His obedient disciples, Heavenly Father will forgive our sins and prepare us to return to Him.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, faith is simply trusting in the plan of salvation. Faith is also the part that “motivates our day-to-day actions.”<sup>27</sup> Having faith means living that faith every day. Everything regarding faith to Mormons is work-oriented. Their faith in Jesus is following his example to be perfect to receive the exaltation from Heavenly Father.

The next of these First Principles and Ordinances which is closely connected to faith is repentance. For Mormons, repentance requires seven steps.<sup>28</sup> The first step is to recognize your sins. Next, you must feel truly sorry for your sins. This sorrow will lead you to abandon sin and never do it again. For all sin, there must be restitution. You must also forgive others their sins. Finally, you must devote yourself completely to keeping all the commands of God.<sup>29</sup> Just as faith was work-oriented so is repentance. Not only are Mormons supposed to ask for forgiveness, but they must also do something to be worthy to receive forgiveness and to be truly repentant.

The First Ordinances are especially important to Mormons because “they signal a person’s formal acceptance of Mormonism.”<sup>30</sup> The first of these ordinances is baptism.

Baptism is the formally appointed means and ordinance which the Lord has provided so that man can signify his personal acceptance of all of the terms and conditions of the eternal gospel covenant. Thus in baptism, which as part of the gospel is itself a new and an everlasting covenant (D. & C. 22), man covenants to abide by all of the laws and requirements of the whole gospel.<sup>31</sup>

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26. Gospel Principles, 18:2.

27. Gospel Principles, 18:2.

28. Gospel Principles, 19:3.

29. Gospel Principles, 19:3.

30. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 39.

31. McConkie, Bruce R. *Mormon Doctrine. Mormon Leaks*. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1958, 67.

Just like the First Principles, baptism is a work-oriented thing. Mormons enter into a covenant with God where their responsibility is to obey all of God's commands. God, on his part, will give them eternal life given that they have kept their end of the covenant.

The last of the First Principles and Ordinances is the laying on of hands. After one is baptized, they will receive this ordinance because through it they receive the Holy Ghost as a companion and as a guide to know the truth. "While the Holy Ghost may inspire all mankind, the gift carries the right to have it as a 'constant companion.' It is 'by the power of the Holy Ghost [that you] may know the truth of all things.'"<sup>32</sup> It is important to note that "all mankind" is inspired by the Holy Ghost, but only those who have received the laying on of hands can have him as a constant companion.

These four things, faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands, make up the First Principles and Ordinances. They are essential to the part of the Mormons in the plan of salvation. Without this, Mormons are unable to prove themselves worthy.

### Worthiness

Being worthy is an important aspect of Mormonism. "Before we can go to the temple, we must be active worthy members of the Church for at least one year."<sup>33</sup> This makes proving themselves to be worthy a top priority. Getting into the temple is necessary for achieving exaltation. However, they must be able to prove themselves to be worthy of this honor. "Being worthy is the way to becoming perfect."<sup>34</sup> Therefore, Mormons must keep lots of commands,

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32. Packer, Boyd K. "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise." *Ensign*, November 1994.

33. *Gospel Principles*, 38:5.

34. *Cares, Speaking the Truth*, 40.

such as the Ten Commandments, but also others as well, such as, always being honest, tithing, and keeping the Word of Wisdom.<sup>35</sup>

Honesty is the best policy. This proverb is one that many people would agree with. For Mormons, it goes beyond just that simple proverb. “Complete honesty is necessary for our salvation. President Brigham Young said, ‘If we accept salvation on the terms it is offered to us, we have got to be honest in every thought, in our reflections, in our meditations, in our private circles, in our deals, in our declarations, and in every act of our lives.’”<sup>36</sup> Being honest is necessary for Mormons to reach exaltation. But it is not just honesty in what they say, but in every aspect of their lives. While lying is the main part of dishonesty that we think of, they also included stealing and cheating as means of being dishonest. “We can also intentionally deceive others by a gesture or a look, by silence, or by telling only part of the truth. Whenever we lead people in any way to believe something that is not true, we are not being honest.”<sup>37</sup>

Tithing is another important part of Mormon practice. When Joseph Smith asked, “O Lord! Show unto thy servants how much thou requirest of the properties of thy people for a tithing.”<sup>38</sup> The Lord said that the people were to give money to start the church and pay off the debt of the President.

And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord. Verily I say unto you, it shall come to pass that all those who gather unto the land of Zion shall be tithed of

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35. These three were chosen because they are some of the questions that are asked of Mormons who seek to enter into the Temple. They must answer questions so that their leaders might determine if the person is worthy enough to enter the Temple (“Church Updates Temple Recommend Interview Questions.” *Ensign*, January 2020).

36. *Gospel Principles*, 31:1. Quoting *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997, 293.

37. *Gospel Principles*, 31:2.

38. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 119:Intro.



their surplus properties, and shall observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide among you.<sup>39</sup>

Mormons are to give one-tenth of all they have to the Church to help the church, but also to make sure that they are worthy. This worthiness goes beyond being able to enter the temple. The Lord said to Joseph Smith, “Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.”<sup>40</sup> Here it is made clear that tithing is also important for the Day of Judgment. The one who tithes will not receive punishment.

One of the most important commands that Mormons have to keep in order to be worthy enough to go into the temple is the Word of Wisdom. In *Doctrine and Covenants* 89, Joseph Smith had a revelation that forbade the consumption and use of liquor, tobacco, hot drinks, or other harmful substances, such as soda when it was created. The point is that they must take care of their bodies and not let anything that they drink harm them in any way. This command is so important that when “seminary teachers asked students to place certain commandments of the Lord in the order of their importance, the Word of Wisdom placed first and chastity fifth.”<sup>41</sup> However, it is not just the people who put the Word of Wisdom first, but the church as well.

The Word of Wisdom put restrictions on members of the Church. To this day those regulations apply to every member and to everyone who seeks to join the church. They are so compelling that no one is to be baptized into the Church without first agreeing to live by them. No one will be called to teach or to lead unless they accept them. When you want to go to the temple, you will be asked if you keep the Word of Wisdom. If you do not, you cannot go to the house of the Lord until you are fully worthy.<sup>42</sup>

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39. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 119:3–5.

40. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 64:23.

41. Kimball, Spencer W. *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1969, 69.

42. Packer, Boyd K. “The Word of Wisdom.” *Ensign*, May 1996.

It is so important to the Mormons that they will not let new members be baptized until they agree to keep it, no one can teach unless they do it, and they cannot enter the temple unless they keep it perfectly.<sup>43</sup> This last reason is the number one reason that Mormons strive to keep this one command over all the others because getting into the temple is one of the most important things Mormons have to do for their part in the plan of salvation.

### Temple Ordinances and Temple Work

Once one has been proven worthy and maintains it, one can enter into the temple. Getting into the temple is so important that more temples had to be built to ensure that everyone could get in to complete their temple work. “It is a wonderful thing to come into the Church, but you cannot receive an exaltation until you have made covenants in the house of the Lord and received the keys and authorities that are there bestowed and which cannot be given in any other place on the earth today.”<sup>44</sup> Joseph F. Smith, who said this, is showing that getting to the temple is so important because there are things that cannot be done anywhere else. Not only are there things that are done in the temple only, but there are four tasks that all Mormons must do as part of their salvation. All Mormons are to have an Endowment Ceremony, an Eternal Marriage, do some ancestry work, and baptism for the dead.<sup>45</sup>

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43. Packer, Boyd K. *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.* Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2002.

44. *Endowed From on High: Temple Preparation Seminar. Church of Jesus Christ.* Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003, 27.

45. Boyd. Preparing.

The first Temple work is the Endowment Ceremony. The Ceremony contains a lot of secrecy, but because of recordings, an accurate record can be given.<sup>46</sup> The first thing that happens is that the person is washed before being put into sacred garments that are not to be taken off for any reason.<sup>47</sup> After this, the next two parts, which are the most important parts of the Ceremony, are the reception of a new name and learning the secret handshakes.<sup>48</sup> The new names are essential to achieving exaltation while the secret handshakes are their tickets in. It is believed that they will need to perform a handshake to be allowed into heaven to receive the exaltation.<sup>49</sup>

The next Temple Work, like the Endowment Ceremony, is essential for receiving exaltation.

Celestial or eternal marriage is the gate to exaltation. To fill the full measure of his creation and obtain eternal life a man must enter into this order of matrimony and keep all of the covenants and obligations that go with it. If a couple is so sealed, the two persons become husband and wife in this life and continue in the same relationship in the world to come.<sup>50</sup>

Eternal marriage is the sealing of a husband and wife to be married from now and forever. That is why it is the gate to exaltation. They go even farther than just saying it is a gate though. “No one! It matters not how righteous they may have been, how intelligent or how well trained they are. No one will enter this highest glory unless he enters into the covenant, and this means the

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46. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 49.

47. “Garments.” *Gospel Topics. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

48. Secret Mormon Temple Handshakes (w/ Hidden Camera). Youtube, 2015.

49. Secret.

50. *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles and His Apostles*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, 131.

new and everlasting covenant of marriage.”<sup>51</sup> It would not matter if you did everything else right, it all comes down to eternal marriage. The marriage ceremony is not any different from a normal marriage in a normal church. The only difference is that in the Temple your marriage is sealed for eternity.<sup>52</sup>

The next Temple Work is not as serious as the previous two but is just as important as they are as it connects the previous two with the last Temple Work of Baptism for the dead. It is ancestry work. Each Mormon family is to keep track of their family history and do extensive research into their family's past.<sup>53</sup> The reason for this has to do with the last Temple Work, the Baptism for the dead.

Baptism for the dead has its basis in 1 Cor 15:29, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?” The Mormons try to use this as a proof passage from the Bible.<sup>54</sup> They also appeal to people's desires to help their families who could not get to the temple for any reason.

Many times the questions arise: “What about my loved ones who have passed away? How can they enjoy these same blessings?” These are very real concerns. All must be baptized in order to enter the celestial kingdom [see John 3:5] not only the living, but also those who have died. How can persons who have passed away be baptized? Only with our help. We must be baptized for them.<sup>55</sup>

People want to help their family members out. They want them to enjoy the blessings of exaltation. However, if people die before they can receive these blessings, their family members

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51. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Importance of the Celestial Marriage.” *Ensign*, October 1979.

52. *Gospel Principles*. 38:3.

53. *Gospel Principles*, 40:5.

54. “Baptisms for the Dead.” *Gospel Topics. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

55. *From You to Your Ancestors: A Basic Course in Family Exaltation*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, 1.

can receive them in their stead. This is why keeping a family record is so important in Mormonism. They keep them so that they can make sure that their family members receive the proper and necessary requirements to achieve exaltation.<sup>56</sup> The same is also true of the Endowment Ceremony and the Eternal Marriage. A person can receive another name other than the one they themselves have received in the place of their family. A husband and wife can perform an Eternal Marriage ceremony for the wife's grandparents who could not make it to the temple to have their own.<sup>57</sup>

### **Post-mortality**

The final part of the plan of salvation comes after a person dies, the post-mortality. The post-mortality world begins at death and goes on into eternity even after Judgment Day.<sup>58</sup> However, the part that is important for the Mormons on their journey to earn their exaltation is everything that comes before Judgment Day but after death. The spirit world of post-mortality is split into two different parts, paradise and prison.<sup>59</sup>

Paradise is where all Mormon believers go. This is like a preliminary heaven. They live in joy and peace.<sup>60</sup> However, this is not the end of their work. They cannot just sit back and

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56. Gospel Principles, 40:5.

57. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 53.

58. "Postmortality." *Gospel Topics. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

59. "Paradise." *Gospel Topics. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

60. Gospel Principles, 41:4.

relax. They still have to work to maintain their Mormon standard of living so that they can eventually earn.<sup>61</sup> Most importantly, they must preach the gospel to those who are in prison.<sup>62</sup>

Prison is the place that all non-Mormons will go after they die. It is a place of darkness and sadness.<sup>63</sup> Those who go there do not necessarily stay there until Judgment Day. This is because Heavenly Father wants all his children to be saved. He wants them to have an opportunity to hear the gospel. This is why the Mormons in paradise go to preach to them. In *Doctrine and Covenants* 138, President Joseph F. Smith has a vision after reading 1 Pe 3:18–20, which says,

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

He was confused as to what Peter meant when he said Jesus “preached unto the spirits in prison.” That’s when he had a vision of Jesus organizing a group of people who had died long ago to go and preach in the prison.<sup>64</sup> God’s love for his children even goes beyond death.

### **A Summary of the Plan of Salvation**

Mormons play a huge part in the plan of salvation. Before they are born, they chose to fight with Jesus and because of that, Heavenly Father blessed them with physical bodies so that they could earn their exaltation. Then with their physical bodies, they can show their love and devotion to

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61. Gospel Principles, 41:1.

62. Gospel Principles, 41:4.

63. Smith, *Book of Mormon*, Alma 40:14.

64. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 138:30–2.

God by keeping all the commandments that he has given to them and performing all the sacred acts that he has told them to do. Finally, when death does come for them, they continue their work by living good Mormon lives even in death and preaching the gospel to those who were not Mormons here on earth. Then when Judgment Day finally arrives, they will be given their exaltation.<sup>65</sup>

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65. "Plan of Salvation." *Gospel Topics. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013.

### PART 3: DOES EXALTATION EQUAL GODHOOD?

With their plan of salvation clearly in view, we can look at the teaching and see whether or not they are teaching that they will become gods. To do so, we need to look at what they themselves are saying in regards to their exaltation and see if they are just disguising the belief of becoming gods with different terms.

In the introduction, there was this quote from the Mormon website:

***Do Latter-day Saints believe they can become “gods”?***

Latter-day Saints believe that is God’s purpose to exalt us to become like Him. But this teaching is often misrepresented by those who caricature the faith. The Latter-day Saint belief is no different than the biblical teaching, which states, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:16-17).<sup>66</sup>

Here the Mormons define exaltation as “to become like [God].” They then say that those who try and say that they will become gods are misrepresenting them. However, their own explanation for what it means to be like God betrays the truth behind those words.

Our Heavenly Father is perfect, and He glories in the fact that it is possible for His children to become like Him. His work and glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Those who receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ will receive special blessings. The Lord has promised, “All things are theirs” (D&C 76:59). 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 76:62).
2. They will become gods (see D&C 132:20–23).
3. They will be united eternally with their righteous family members and will be able to have eternal increase.
4. They will receive a fulness of joy.
5. They will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have—all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge (see D&C 132:19–20). President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “The Father has promised through the Son that all that he has

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66. “Frequently Asked Questions About Latter-Day Saints.” *Newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org*, September 16, 2010. <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/frequently-asked-questions>.



shall be given to those who are obedient to His commandments. *They shall increase in knowledge, wisdom, and power, going from grace to grace, until the fulness of the perfect day shall burst upon them.*<sup>67</sup>

From this very definition of the blessing of exaltation that when Mormons say that they will be like God, they mean they will be gods. Blessing 2 says explicitly that and references their Scriptures. “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.”<sup>68</sup> Twice in this verse alone, it says that they will be gods. Therefore, when a Mormon says that exaltation means that they will be like God, they are actually saying that they will become gods themselves.<sup>69</sup>

Another way that Mormons talk about exaltation is by saying that it means that they will live the life that God lives.

Mormons believe that God has created numerous worlds and planets and that we are not the only planet with people on it. Now, no, we do not claim to have contact with people on other planets or anything like that. I mean, they could be in galaxies further away than either George Lucas himself can imagine. And, no, we don't think of little green men or aliens or saucers or any of that, but we do think that there has got to be more life out there created by God. That being said Mormons believe that God wants his children to become perfect and be exalted and eventually live the life that he lives. Now we don't know all of the details of what it means to be exalted the way God is but anything is possible and we know it would be absolutely wonderful.<sup>70</sup>

Here this Mormon woman, talks about living the life that God lives, but not knowing what that means. However, this idea is also made very clear in *Gospel Principles*, “Exaltation is eternal

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67. *Gospel Principles*, 47:3, quoting *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:36; italics in original.

68. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 132:20.

69. Cares, Mark J. *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House, 1998, 13.

70. *What Mormons Believe: Their Own Planet*. YouTube. What Mormons Believe, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C32K9w2eLVU>. 0:37-1:20

life, the kind of life 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 like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation.”<sup>71</sup> Despite her protests that Mormons do not teach that they will be able to create their own planets and that those who say this about them “have taken our true doctrine and tweaked it just enough to make us seem like total morons,” the Mormons do, in fact, teach this. Since God is a creator and lives as one, then since we will live like him in exaltation, then we will be creators. Therefore, once again Mormons are talking about becoming gods.

Another term that Mormons use to talk about exaltation is “eternal life.”<sup>72</sup> They try and make it sound like it means the same thing that Christians mean, living with God for eternity, by saying things like this, “Our whole purpose in life should be to do those things which will enable us to gain eternal life, and eternal life is the name of the kind of life possessed by the Father and the Son; it is exaltation in the eternal realms.”<sup>73</sup> It doesn’t seem like what they are saying is that eternal life means that they will be gods, but McConkie shows otherwise.

Accordingly, eternal life is not a name that has reference only to the unending duration of a future life; immortality is to live forever in the resurrected state, and by the grace of God all men will gain this unending continuance of life. But only those who obey the fulness of the gospel law will inherit eternal life. (D. & C. 29:43-44.) It is "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D. & C. 14:7), for it is the kind, status, type, and quality of life that God himself enjoys. Thus those who gain eternal life receive exaltation; they are sons of God, joint-heirs with Christ, members of the Church of the Firstborn; they overcome all things, have all power, and receive the fulness of the Father. They are gods.<sup>74</sup>

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71. Gospel Principles, 47:2

72. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 13.

73. *The Life and Teachings*, 328, quoting Smith, Joseph F., “Address at Snow College”, 14 May 1971, 3–7.

74. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 220.

Not only does McConkie say that eternal life means that they will be gods, but that it doesn't mean that a person will live forever. Even here they cannot hide the truth that they teach that they will become gods.

Mormons also talk about having an eternal family.<sup>75</sup> “They [Adam and Eve] and such of their children as abode in the truth have since gone on in immortality and glory, and now as resurrected beings, parents and children together, comprise an eternal family unit in celestial glory.”<sup>76</sup> It sounds like what they are saying is that, in eternity, families will be reunited and remain together. Yet this is just another term to hide the fact that they believe that they will become gods.

Marriage and the family unit are the central part of the plan of progression and exaltation. All things center in and around the family unit in the eternal perspective. Exaltation consists in the continuation of the family unit in eternity. Those for whom the family unit continues have eternal life; all others have a lesser degree of salvation in the mansions that are prepared.<sup>77</sup>

Here McConkie shows how marriage and the eternal family are closely connected to eternal life which has been shown to mean that they will become gods.

Though the Mormons try to hide the truth, it cannot be hidden. They can use different terms for exaltation, but in the end, the core of the belief is that they will be able to become gods. This is exactly the lie that Satan told in the garden and, just like Adam and Eve, they have swallowed it, hook, line, and sinker. Therefore, they need to hear the truth of God's Word so that they might be saved from this lie.

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75. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 13.

76. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 253.

77. *The Life and Teachings*, 131, quoting McConkie, Bruce R., *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*. Vol. 1. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1965. 546-7

#### PART 4: THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF MORMONISM

The Mormon Church has some very weird practices and teachings as can be seen in the above sections. Yet despite this, people are still attracted to Mormonism. While their growth isn't astronomical, it has been a constant growth.<sup>78</sup> This is something that we need to be aware of when we go to preach the truth to them. It may also show us ways that we can use to keep them in the truth of God's Word.

In the days when Mormonism was just starting out, the Second Great Awakening was taking place. People were looking for new revelations, things that would bring them closer to God.<sup>79</sup> Mormon did just that. Joseph Smith paved the way for Mormonism to be filled with new and continuing revelations. His aim in these revelations was to create a utopian society.<sup>80</sup> The very law-oriented nature of Mormonism does tend toward this idea which also attracts a lot of people to it. Mormons are nice and helpful people.<sup>81</sup> The way that Mormons act is the way that people want all of society to be.

Along with the law-oriented nature of Mormonism, another thing people find attractive is that they are able to earn their salvation.<sup>82</sup> This follows in line with the American Dream. The idea that if you work hard enough you would be able to earn something more is what drove many

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78. The Mormon Church currently has 16663663 members and their growth rate as of 2020 was .6%. ("2020 Statistical Report for the April 2021 Conference." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, 2021.)

79. Gaustad, Edwin S. *A Religious History of America*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1966. 132.

80. Ostling, Richard N., and Joan K. Ostling. *Mormon America: The Power and The Promise*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2000. 14.

81. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 161.

82. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 158.

people to America.<sup>83</sup> Mormonism's plan of salvation is just that. If you do enough and work hard enough, you can earn a higher position, even becoming a god.<sup>84</sup>

Another attraction for people is how Mormonism makes God easy to understand.<sup>85</sup> The Bible teaches that God is a Triune God.<sup>86</sup> This is a complicated thing for people to understand and that cannot be explained easily. In Mormonism, however, God is just an exalted man.<sup>87</sup> A simple couplet is used to explain what that means, "As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be."<sup>88</sup> God is easier to understand because he is just a man who achieved his own exaltation.

The afterlife is another attraction for people to Mormonism. Christian religions talk about how after death, you either go to hell or you go to heaven. There are no second chances. However, in Mormonism, there is a second chance. The time between death and Judgment Day can be used to convert to Mormonism.<sup>89</sup> Everyone has a second chance. However, it is not just for the person who dies, but also for our loved ones who have died. The idea that you can save your family is a very attractive idea.<sup>90</sup>

Probably one of the bigger things that attract people to Mormonism is their activities. The Mormon Church has activities for young people, older people, married people, single

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83. Gaustad, *A Religious History*, 37.

84. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 13.

85. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 159.

86. Kuske, *Luther's Catechism*, 136.

87. Ostling and Ostling, *Mormon America*, 388, quoting Joseph Smith, "King Follett Discourse," April 7, 1844.

88. *The Life and Teachings*, 327.

89. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 55.

90. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 56.

people, and non-Mormons.<sup>91</sup> These activities not only attract people but they keep them engaged in the church. This is something that we should also keep in mind when we are working with Mormons. They will be looking for things to do when they leave the Mormon Church. Having activities and events regularly will help keep them.<sup>92</sup>

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91. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 160.

92. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 254.

## PART 5: ADDRESSING THE EXALTATION TO GODHOOD

Knowing what attracts people to Mormonism as well as what they believe is very helpful in knowing how to preach the truth of God's Word to them. How, though, do we do that? What do we say to these people who so fully believe in what Mormonism teaches? How can we be prepared to show them the errors of their ways and point them to the one person that can save them, Jesus?

### **Being Prepared**

Before we can look into the Bible for the answers to this question, a person needs to be prepared for the difficulties that come when teaching the gospel to Mormons. When speaking with Mormons, both parties, the Lutheran and the Mormon, come with contradicting beliefs. When they try to speak with each other about their beliefs, the Lutheran will find it troubling to find common footing or will be confused as to why the Mormon so readily agrees with everything he is saying.<sup>93</sup> These issues come from several different points: the view of the Bible and their Presidents, talk of Hell doesn't scare them, and the different language they use.

### Mormon View of the Bible

One of the biggest issues is their view of Scripture. The reason for this deals with how Mormons define the word Scripture in comparison to the rest of Christendom. Mormons have four books that fall under the definition of Scripture: The Bible, *The Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great*

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93. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 200.

*Price*, and *Doctrine and Covenants*.<sup>94</sup> Because they have multiple Scriptures they reference, their view of the Bible is very low.

### ***The Pearl of Great Price***

*The Pearl of Great Price* is the lowest viewed book in Mormon Scripture. This is not to say that they completely disregard it, but rather that they do not turn to it for all the answers, mostly because it is only 60 pages without a great amount of theological significance.<sup>95</sup> It is made up of only five books: Moses, Abraham, Joseph Smith-Matthew, Joseph Smith-History, and The Articles of Faith. The Book of Moses is simply a reworking of the first five chapters of Genesis.<sup>96</sup> In this book, the story of Enoch is greatly expanded and stresses the agency of man.<sup>97</sup> The book of Abraham teaches Mormons about the plurality of gods and how they were once spirit children before they came into mortal bodies.<sup>98</sup> Joseph Smith-Matthew is just Joseph Smith's translation of Matt 23:39–24:51 plus a few extra verses.<sup>99</sup> Joseph Smith-History gives a brief history of the Mormon Church.<sup>100</sup> The final part of *The Pearl of Great Price* is the Articles of Faith. This is the most quoted part of the *Pearl of Great Price* because they hand out this book in the form of a small card or bookmarks to people who are interested in

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94. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 101.

95. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 110.

96. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 110.

97. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 110.

98. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 110.

99. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 110.

100. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 110.



Mormonism. However, it does not show all the unique and strange teachings that Mormons have.<sup>101</sup>

### ***The Holy Bible***

The Holy Bible is viewed a little higher than the *Pearl of Great Price*. In fact, the *Pearl of Great Price* in The Articles of Faith says, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.”<sup>102</sup> They do believe that the Bible is in fact God’s Word, but only if it is translated correctly. Their understanding of the word translated is important here. Mark J. Cares says that their definition is three-fold here. “Not often used as a term to describe the process of rendering something from the original language into another language. Rather used to refer to (1) the transmission of the original text over the centuries, (2) the interpretation of the text, and (3) the revision of the text. ‘By translation is meant a revision of the Bible by inspiration or revelation.’”<sup>103</sup> With this understanding of the word “translation,” it is understandable why the Mormon Church has such low regard for the Bible. They cannot trust it at all because they do not trust its translation.<sup>104</sup> This also despite the fact that Joseph Smith wrote his own translation, albeit, not a complete translation of the entire Bible, but rather just the KJV with some of his own additions to it. Therefore the Bible that Mormons typically will use is a Mormon published KJV with an appendix containing Joseph Smith’s Translation.<sup>105</sup>

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101. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 111.

102. Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Articles of Faith 1:4

103. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 295, quoting Joseph F. Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1953, vol. 1, 234–35.

104. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 102.

105. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 104.

### ***The Book of Mormon***

*The Book of Mormon* is the second most important Mormon book. While they quote it just about as much as the Bible, it is clear from their Articles of Faith that it is seen as more trustworthy than the Bible. While The Article of Faith says that the Bible is God's Word insofar as it is translated correctly, it says this regarding *The Book of Mormon*, "We also believe *the Book of Mormon* to be the word of God."<sup>106</sup> There is no conditional statement for the *Book of Mormon*. It simply is God's Word.

Another reason that the *Book of Mormon* is important is that the church makes it that way. They constantly encourage people to read the *Book of Mormon* and to know what it says.<sup>107</sup> On top of this, they also encourage them not to discuss with non-Mormons the discrepancies and historical inaccuracies that are in the *Book of Mormon*.<sup>108</sup>

The reason that the *Book of Mormon* is not the most important book to Mormons is that it does not contain a whole lot of doctrine, much like the *Pearl of Great Price* did not. It contains the history of the Jaredites, the Nephites, and the Lamanites. These groups are supposedly descendants of Jews who had migrated to America centuries before Christ. The Nephites were even visited by the resurrected Jesus.<sup>109</sup>

### ***Doctrine and Covenants***

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106. Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Articles of Faith 1:4

107. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 105.

108. Cares, *Speaking the Truth* 106.

109. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 106.

The most important book in Mormon Scripture is the *Doctrine and Covenants*.<sup>110</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, one of the Presidents of the Mormon Church, explains well the importance of the *Doctrine and Covenants*,

In my judgment there is no book on earth yet come to man as important as the book known as the Doctrine and Covenants, with all due respect to the Book of Mormon, and the Bible, and the Pearl of Great Price, which we say are our standards in doctrine. The book of Doctrine and Covenants to us stands in a peculiar position above them all. I am going to tell you why. When I say that, do not for a moment think I do not value the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and the Pearl of Great Price, just as much as any man that lives; I think I do. I do not know of anybody who has read them more, and I appreciate them; they are wonderful; they contain doctrine and revelation and commandments that we should heed; but the Bible is a history containing the doctrine and commandments given to the people anciently. That applies also to the Book of Mormon. It is the doctrine and the history and the commandments of the people who dwelt upon this continent anciently. But this Doctrine and Covenants contains the word of God to those who dwell here now. It is our book. It belongs to the Latter-day Saints. More precious than gold, the Prophet says we should treasure it more than the riches of the whole earth. I wonder if we do? If we value it, understand it, and know what it contains, we will value it more than wealth; it is worth more to us than the riches of the earth.<sup>111</sup>

While all the books that make up the Mormon Scripture were all divinely revealed, only *Doctrine and Covenants* reveals God's Word to Mormons in the present age. This is why Mormons hold this book in such high regard.<sup>112</sup> They look for revelations and *Doctrine and Covenants* contains hundreds of them. On top of this, *Doctrine and Covenants* contains nearly all of their doctrines. Here one can learn about baptism for the dead, celestial marriage, and becoming gods.<sup>113</sup> Despite all this important doctrine, the one part of *Doctrine and Covenants* that makes it so important is that it contains Joseph Smith's "prophecy" concerning the Civil

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110. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 107

111. Smith and McConkie. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 118.

112. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 107.

113. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 108.

War. Since the Civil War did happen and Joseph Smith's predictions about it came true, Mormons will point to it to show that Joseph Smith had to have been a true prophet of God, making all his other revelations also true.<sup>114</sup> That is why it is such an important part of Mormon Scripture.

### A Lutheran's Response

One of the hardest things that Lutherans struggle with is this particular belief of the Mormons. Lutherans cannot understand how someone or a group of people could hold the Bible in such low regard and claim to be Christian. It would be very easy to try and argue with Mormons about this or try to prove that they are not Christians because they don't hold the Bible in high regard. Using this approach would be detrimental to preaching the gospel to them.<sup>115</sup> Arguing just leads to more arguing. How, then, should a Lutheran deal with this false belief of the Mormons?

Knowing and understanding what the Mormons believe about "Scripture" as they mean it is not for arguing but rather being prepared for it. Lutherans should know what is contained in each of their books because that is where they will go for their defense in the same way that a Lutheran will turn to the Bible for theirs.<sup>116</sup> Knowing what they believe and understanding why they believe it will "increase our compassion for them."<sup>117</sup>

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114. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 108.

115. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 6.

116. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 101.

117. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 8.

Lutherans should also be willing to make sacrifices in regards to this. A modern-day Lutheran might be more used to using the New International Version, whether 84 or 2011, or the Evangelical Heritage Version, but these translations do not hold any value to the Mormons. The most legitimate, at least, in the eyes of the Mormons, translation of the Bible, as the Mormons understand translation, is the KJV, in particular, the version that has the JST in it. Therefore, if using the KJV would remove one of the many obstacles that stand in the way of a Mormon hearing the true gospel about Jesus, then a Lutheran should be willing to use it to proclaim this gospel.<sup>118</sup>

#### Mormon View on Their President

Mormons have a very high view of their Scriptures. They will quote it and point to it when they are teaching people about Mormonism. However, there is something that they hold above even their Scriptures. This is the word of their President. Why would they hold their President's word as above their Scriptures? Mormons hold them in such high regard because they believe in the need for a "Living Prophet."<sup>119</sup>

Mormons give three reasons and proofs that show the need for a Living Prophet. The first is that God has promised that there will always be a prophet among his people. They point to Amos 3:7 as proof, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." The Mormons reason that without a prophet, they would have no idea about the secrets of God. Therefore, there must be a Living Prophet in every generation.<sup>120</sup>

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118. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 201.

119. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 120.

120. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 120.

The second reason that Mormons give is contradictory to the first one but works in tandem with it as well. The reason that Mormons need a Living Prophet is that the Bible is untrustworthy and incomplete.<sup>121</sup> Because the Bible cannot be trusted, they needed someone to show them and tell them the truth. For this, they need someone who has divine revelations, someone like Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith is the proof that there must always be a Living Prophet. He himself was the first Living Prophet in the modern Church. He used prophetic visions to establish the Mormon Church. Since he himself was the first President as well, it was natural that, after he died, everyone looked at the new President for new revelations.<sup>122</sup>

This idea isn't just unique to Mormonism. The Catholic Church has a similar idea concerning the Pope. Just like with the Pope being supported by the Catholic Church, the idea of the President being a prophet is supported by the Mormon Church.

Next unto God and Christ, in the earth is placed one unto whom the keys of power and authority of the Holy Priesthood are conferred, and unto whom the right of presidency is given. He is God's mouthpiece to His people, in all things pertaining to the building up of Zion and to the spiritual and temporal salvation of the people. He is as God's vice-regent; I do not hesitate to announce this truth; for it is His word, and therefore it is true.<sup>123</sup>

The Mormon Church places their President as being nearly as authoritative as God. They call him "God's mouthpiece."<sup>124</sup>

The President as the Living Prophet holds so much respect that people are encouraged to read his words in their magazine, *Ensign*, and to study them carefully, especially in April and

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121. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 120.

122. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 121.

123. Smith, Joseph F. *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d. p. 147, quoted from Conference Report of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. April 1898.

124. Smith, *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, 147.

October, when the President himself speaks.<sup>125</sup> The reason that they want their people to read their Prophet's words is that his words have the power to overwrite their own Scriptures. One such example of this deals with the teaching on the plurality of wives. Joseph Smith in 1843 had a revelation that showed the importance of celestial marriage and the principles of having multiple wives.<sup>126</sup> He said,

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, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.<sup>127</sup>

This means that as long as he is marrying a virgin and his wife, or wives, give consent, a man is allowed to marry as many women as he wishes. Yet, despite their own Scriptures, the words of the First Living Prophet, when the United States made polygamy, or the practice of having more than one spouse illegal, their current Living Prophet, Wilford Woodruff, changed that teaching, saying,

Which is the wisest course for the Latter-day Saints to pursue—to continue to attempt to practice plural marriage, with the laws of the nation against it and the opposition of sixty millions of people, and at the cost of the confiscation and loss of all the Temples, and the stopping of all the ordinances therein, both for the living and the dead, and the imprisonment of the First Presidency and Twelve and the heads of families in the Church, and the confiscation of personal property of the people (all of which of themselves would stop the practice); or, after doing and suffering what we have through our adherence to this principle to cease the practice and submit to the law, and through doing so leave the Prophets, Apostles and fathers at home, so that they can instruct the people and attend to the duties of the Church, and also leave the Temples in the hands of the Saints, so that they can attend to the ordinances of the Gospel, both for the living and the dead?<sup>128</sup>

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125. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 123

126. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 132:Intro.

127. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 132:61.

128. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, Official Declaration 1.

In short, President Wilford Woodruff has called a hold on the practice of plural marriage in order to preserve the other practices in the Temple. Since this time, the Mormon Church has not practiced plural marriages.

#### A Lutheran's Response

It would be easy to mock and laugh at this teaching of having a Living Prophet because it makes the Scriptures, all of their Scriptures, up to questioning. When will the next major doctrine be changed because of new revelation? This is why Lutherans should seek to teach Mormons the truth about God's Word. They have it so deeply ingrained into them from little on that the Bible is untrustworthy and they need a Living Prophet to tell them the truth. If we try and tear down their prophet, just like with trying to refute their idea of Scripture, the Mormons will block us out and the truth will be lost to them. Instead, Lutherans ought to read through what their Prophets have said.<sup>129</sup> Every month, the newest edition of *Ensign* is published. They are also published online so that anyone can read them.<sup>130</sup>

#### When Hell Does Not Scare Them

When the Bible speaks of Hell, it does not depict it as a pleasant place. Instead, it is described as a place of complete misery and despair. It is a place complete void of God's love. Nobody wants to go there even for a second let alone for eternity. Yet for a Mormon, Hell doesn't scare them. In fact, a few Mormons, particularly those who are not very active in the Mormon Church,

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129. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 8.

130. <https://abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/magazines/before-2021/ensign?lang=eng>.



are not worried about hell.<sup>131</sup> This is because to Mormons, Hell isn't a place of eternal misery, but rather a temporary one. Hell also can have a mixed meaning for them.<sup>132</sup> The first one refers to the spirit prison that non-Mormons go to in post-mortality. They only suffer there until Judgment Day or until they are converted by a Mormon to Mormonism. Then their torment in Hell is over. However, for the second one, one needs to look a little closer at what happens in post-mortality after Judgment Day.

### *The Three kingdoms*

When the final trumpet sounds, everyone will be judged. Instead of being sent to either heaven or hell, there are three places to which a person could be sent, the Celestial kingdom, the Terrestrial kingdom, and the Telestial kingdom. These three kingdoms are all heaven but are different degrees of glory, going from the highest to the lowest form.

The Celestial kingdom is the highest heaven. This kingdom is reserved only for faithful Mormons and children who died before the age of eight, which is the age of accountability. All of these people will be able to reside with their Heavenly Father.<sup>133</sup> This kingdom is also the kingdom of the exaltation. However, not all who receive this kingdom on Judgment Day will receive exaltation. There are three different levels within the Celestial kingdom. Only those who receive the highest level within the Celestial kingdom receive exaltation.<sup>134</sup> Not much is known

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131. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 61.

132. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 63.

133. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 59.

134. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 59–60.

about the second level, but the final level is for those who did not receive a celestial marriage. This lowest level becomes ministering servants.<sup>135</sup>

The Terrestrial kingdom belongs to those who were not Mormon in mortality but became Mormons in post-mortality and to those Mormons who were not valiant. Because of their failure on earth, they are only allowed this lesser glory. They will not be able to see Heavenly Father and dwell with him, but they will be able to dwell with Jesus.<sup>136</sup>

The Telestial kingdom is the lowest of the three kingdoms. Yet, despite this, it still has tremendous glory, not as great as the Terrestrial kingdom, but great enough that Elder John A. Widstoe said,

The [Doctrine and Covenants] explains clearly that the lowest glory to which man is assigned is so glorious as to be beyond the understanding of man. It is a doctrine fundamental in Mormonism that the meanest sinner, in the final judgment, will receive a glory which is beyond human understanding, which is so great that we are unable to describe it adequately.<sup>137</sup>

This kingdom's glory is reserved, as Elder John A. Widstoe says, for the meanest sinner. "Also in the spirit prison are those who rejected the gospel after it was preached to them either on earth or in the spirit prison."<sup>138</sup> This shows that everyone would receive some sort of glory. Yet it is in this kingdom that hell is mentioned again. The first type of hell, the temporal one, reappears here. The previous quote continues, "These spirits suffer in a condition known as hell...After suffering in full for their sins, they will be allowed to inherit the lowest degree of glory, which is

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135. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 60.

136. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 61.

137. *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001.  
[https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/32493\\_eng.pdf?lang=eng.](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/32493_eng.pdf?lang=eng.), 166.

138. *Gospel Principles*, 41:4

the telestial kingdom.”<sup>139</sup> The second type of hell appears once a person receives the Telestial kingdom and the Terrestrial kingdom.

Of course, those who enter the telestial kingdom, and those who enter the terrestrial kingdom will have the eternal punishment (footnote definition) which will come to them in knowing that they might, if they had kept the commandments of the Lord, have returned to his presence as his sons and daughters. This will be a torment to them, and in that sense it will be hell.<sup>140</sup>

The concept of hell displayed in this quote is that of sorrow from being separated from their Heavenly Father. While this concept of hell is not far off from something Lutherans could also say, there is a major difference in that the Mormon understanding of hell has glory and joy attached to it.<sup>141</sup>

#### A Lutheran's Response

Hell is an important part when it comes to preaching the Law. Hell is very often the curb of the Law. It is the most severe punishment God will give to unrepentant sinners. If the threat of Hell doesn't scare Mormons, what can Lutherans use for a curb? On Judgment Day, there is one more place that a person could go other than the three kingdoms mentioned above. The Mormon Church calls it, the Outer Darkness.<sup>142</sup>

The Outer Darkness is the exact equivalent to the Lutheran's Hell. However, there is one major difference: The Outer Darkness is reserved only for certain people. Joseph Smith said,

What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that

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139. Gospel Principles, 41:4

140. The Life and Teachings, 66.

141. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 63.

142. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 187.

the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy. This is the case with many apostates of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>143</sup>

The only people who can go to the Outer Darkness are not all unbelievers, but rather those who were a part of the Mormon Church who came to reject the teachings of the Mormon Church. Those who have not joined the Mormon Church, even if they have heard the teachings of the Mormon Church, are excluded from the apostates who will receive Outer Darkness because they have not received the Holy Ghost since they have not received baptism, or proper baptism, or the laying on of hands, both of which are necessary to receive the Holy Ghost. Thus, many Mormons don't believe that many people will go to the Outer Darkness.<sup>144</sup> The only ones that they believe will go there are Satan and his demons.<sup>145</sup> However, since Outer Darkness is the Mormon's equivalent of Hell, Lutherans should call Hell the Outer Darkness so as to use the Law as a curb.<sup>146</sup> Mormons may not fear an eternal Hell, but they do fear the Outer Darkness. They do not want to go there if they can help it. Lutherans need to show them that they are, in fact, heading in that direction.

### Language Barrier

One of the biggest issues when one goes to preach to Mormons is when, while you are going through what the Bible actually says which is not what the Mormons teach and you are using the

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143. *Teachings of the Prophet: Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Co., 1938, 358. Quoted in *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, 161.

144. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 187.

145. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 283.

146. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 187.

phrases that you were taught, the Mormon agrees with you one hundred percent of the time. Many people have been thrown off by the fact that Mormons agree with what they are saying. Considering what has been said above about what Mormons really believe, it is confusing how they could agree with what Lutherans teach. The reason there is this confusion results from the way that they define words. Some have gone so far as to call it a separate language, Mormonese.<sup>147</sup> The only way to be prepared to deal with these different definitions is to look at these words and see what they really mean when they use them.

### ***Atonement***

One of the major gospel words that Lutherans use is atonement. When Lutherans use this term, they are referring to the work of Christ to save us from our sins. Luther's Small Catechism defines atonement as, "A payment offered to remove the guilt of sin so that God and sinful man are reconciled."<sup>148</sup><sup>149</sup> However, the way Mormons use this is completely different. Mark J. Cares defines Mormon atonement as this,

- (1) Used almost exclusively as a reference to Jesus' conquering *physical death* for all people. By conquering physical death, Jesus made it possible for them to enter again into the presence of Heavenly Father - if for no other reason then to be judged by him. In other words, they are again at-one with him, or atoned.
- (2) At times it includes the thought of Jesus' paying for their sins. But underlying all such references is the thought that they have to pay him back.<sup>150</sup>

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147. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 256.

148. It is important to note that the word reconcile means "To restore someone to peace and harmony with another." (Kuske, David P. *Luther's Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and an Exposition for Children and Adults Written in Contemporary English*. Milwaukee, WI: Board for Parish Education, 1982, 346.)

149. Kuske, *Luther's Catechism*, 337.

150. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 259.

Jesus' atoning work did not save us from our sins entirely according to Mormons. We still have to pay him back in this life and in post-mortality. However, he has made it possible for us to enter into the Celestial kingdom because death will no longer be the end for us. This definition also applies to their definition of redemption. Jesus' redemptive work paid for the temporal fall, but we still have to work to earn our eternal redemption.

### *Grace*

Grace is the biggest and most important gospel word in the Lutheran Church. Grace is "God's undeserved love which provides forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation for all people."<sup>151</sup> To Lutherans, grace is something that we are given freely and without any expectations from us. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph 2:8–9) Grace does not require anything from us. However, the opposite is true with Mormon grace.

The main idea of the word is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by His atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life. It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.<sup>152</sup>

Grace is merely the power Heavenly Father gives so that we can continue to do good works to earn exaltation. It is not a free gift from him.

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151. Kuske, Luther's Catechism, 341.

152. "Grace." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, March 24, 2015. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/introduction?lang=eng>.

### ***Holy Ghost vs. Holy Spirit***

Since the Mormon Church uses the KJV translation of the Bible, it is unsurprising to find that they use the term Holy Ghost. What is surprising, though, is that they also use the term Holy Spirit. However, there is a distinct difference between the two of them.

The Holy Ghost should not be confused with the Spirit which fills the immensity of space and which is everywhere present. This other Spirit is impersonal and has no size, nor dimension; it proceeds forth from the presence of the Father and the Son and is in all things. We should speak of the Holy Ghost as a personage as "he" and this other Spirit as "it," although when we speak of the power or gift of the Holy Ghost we may properly say "it."<sup>153</sup>

The Holy Spirit is impersonal, an object, while the Holy Ghost is a personal being, not one with a body, but having a "personage." The Holy Spirit also differs from the Holy Ghost in its purpose. "The Spirit which is the light of Christ is sent to strive with men (D. & C. I :33), and to give the guidance which results in the great inventions and discoveries."<sup>154</sup> The Holy Spirit is more of a partner who helps us along while the Holy Ghost is a companion and a guide. However, on occasion, Holy Spirit and Holy Ghost can be used interchangeably. "The Spirit which is the Holy Ghost is a revelator; by his power men gain testimonies of the truth."<sup>155</sup>

### ***Savior***

The confusing word that Mormons and Lutherans use is the word, Savior. Both Lutherans and Mormons call Jesus their Savior, but they both have different definitions of what that word means. When Lutherans call Jesus their Savior, they mean that Jesus has fully and freely saved

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153. Smith and McConkie. *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, 32

154. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 681.

155. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 681.

them from their sins. When Mormons call Jesus their Savior, they mean that he has fully paid for their sins, but they have to pay him back. This is exemplified in Joseph Smith's quote, "So, the effect of Adam's transgression was to place all of us in the pit with him. Then the Savior comes along, not subject to the pit, and lowers the ladder. He comes down into the pit and makes it possible for us to use the ladder to escape."<sup>156</sup>

### **Preaching the Truth in Love**

Now that we are prepared to deal with the different issues that can come up when preaching the truth to Mormons, we can finally preach the truth to them. The truth is that we cannot be saved by anything that we do. We are sinners who are incapable of earning our salvation. This is why Jesus came down. He became man to save us from our sins and to earn our salvation for us. How, though, can we preach this Law and Gospel message to Mormons so that they may be saved from the grasp of Satan?

#### The Law

If it hasn't already been made clear from the above, Mormonism is a law-based religion. They have to do good works to earn their salvation. Mormons will call the gospel "gospel law."<sup>157</sup> As a result of this mentality, many Mormons have become "pharisaical" in regards to their lives. For this reason, their consciences have been dulled to the truth of the law. Therefore, the goal of preaching the law to them is to make them realize that the standard that they need to reach to achieve exaltation is impossible and that instead, they are going to Outer Darkness.

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156. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 83, quoting Joseph Smith, quoted in *Sharing the Gospel*, 1976, 71.

157. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*.



The following parable is very useful in showing that it is not possible for Mormons to earn their salvation. The first half of the parable is about a man who goes into debt to get something that he wanted. Despite the advice of those around him, he signed a contract with a very strict creditor and got what he wanted. When the contract finally came due, the man could not pay it back. He begged his creditor for mercy, but the creditor could not give it to him. If he showed mercy, there would be no justice. The man had no idea what to do.<sup>158</sup>

The debtor had a friend. He came to help. He knew the debtor well. He knew him to be shortsighted. He thought him foolish to have gotten himself into such a predicament. Nevertheless, he wanted to help because he loved him. He stepped between them, faced the creditor, and made this offer.

“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.”

As the creditor was pondering the offer, the mediator added, “You demanded justice. Though he cannot pay you, I will do so. You will have been justly dealt with and can ask no more. It would not be just.”

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. You need not go to prison.”

And so it was that the creditor was paid in full. He had been justly dealt with. No contract had been broken. The debtor, in turn, had been extended mercy. Both laws stood fulfilled. Because there was a mediator, justice had claimed its full share, and mercy was fully satisfied.<sup>159</sup>

In this part of the parable, a friend pays the debt of the man and tells the man that he will be the man’s new creditor. What does this parable mean? We are the man and God is the creditor. Because of our sin, we owe God a great debt. When the debt comes due, we are unable to pay it back. The friend in this parable is Jesus. He pays our debt to God in full but expects us

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158. Boyd, *Ensign*, May 1977.

159. Boyd, *Ensign*, May 1977.

to pay him back.<sup>160</sup> The way that Mormons explain this actually comes up a little later in the same article that this parable first appeared in,

Already He has accomplished the redemption of all mankind from mortal death; resurrection is extended to all without condition. He also makes possible redemption from the second death, which is the spiritual death, which is separation from the presence of our Heavenly Father. This redemption can come only to those who are clean, for no unclean thing can dwell in the presence of God.<sup>161</sup>

Our time period to pay back the debt has been extended. No longer do we just have this life to pay it back, but also the next life until Judgment Day. To Mormons, this idea brings them great joy, the same joy that Lutherans have in hearing that Christ has paid for everything and that we are not required to do anything. This, though, is a result of missing what is owed to Jesus. The debt still needs to be paid. What is that payment, though?

The above quote says that “redemption can come only to those who are clean.”<sup>162</sup> To do this, they need to obey the commands of God. Matthew 5:48 is a great passage that sums up what God expects from those who obey his commandments. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Here Jesus himself is showing that we need to “be perfect.”<sup>163</sup> “Being perfect” is a major stress for Mormons.<sup>164</sup> They know that perfection is

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160. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 83.

161. Boyd, *Ensign*, May 1977.

162. Boyd, *Ensign*, May 1977.

163. It is important to note here that some Mormons would say that what Jesus is saying here doesn't have to do with just our behavior but also our resurrection. Russel M. Nelson says that perfection is two parts our behavior here on earth and our bodies being made incorruptible in heaven. He points out that the word used for “perfect” here is “teleios.” He looked through the entire Greek New Testament for this word and its uses. He concluded that it isn't ever used to mean “without fault.” (Nelson, Russel M. “Perfection Pending.” *Ensign*, November 1995.) However, upon doing the same research as him, Jas 3:2 will stand out as different. “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” Here James is clearly talking about behavior, namely not sinning with what we say. This can also be seen in Ps 39:1 which can be seen referenced in one of the footnotes in this verse.

164. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 161.

necessary to achieve exaltation. The issue comes in when they understand “be” to mean “become.”<sup>165</sup> Here pointing out that Joseph Smith in his translation emphasizes the need to “be perfect” rather than “become perfect” prevents them from trying to point out that in Greek “be” is in the future tense.<sup>166</sup> While this may seem like the perfect Law passage that should shake them to their core, it doesn’t stop some Mormons. They believe that they can *be* perfect.<sup>167</sup>

Also during this time, it is important for us to point out to them that failing to “be perfect” results in them going to Outer Darkness. Mormons believe that they are safe from Outer Darkness because they don’t believe really anyone will go there. However, when shown Matt 7:13, 14, they become a little more worried. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Here Jesus says that many people will enter into destruction. Mormons will have trouble explaining away what it means that many will go to destruction.<sup>168</sup> For them, this destruction is only for Satan and his demons. They may try and point out that Outer Darkness is only for the apostates. Then, we show them that according to their doctrine on apostasy, “If they do anything contrary to the standards of personal righteousness required by the gospel-then to that extent they are in personal apostasy and need to repent.”<sup>169</sup> If they are unrepentant, they are considered apostates. We then need to remind them that the Mormon view of repentance includes a

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165. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 191.

166. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 194.

167. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 195.

168. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 188.

169. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 43.

complete abandonment of sin, meaning a murderer isn't repentant if he stops killing and starts stealing.<sup>170</sup>

At this point, we must be the Law to them, specifically, we need to be the mirror of the Law. "If our Mormon friends are having trouble keeping the Word of Wisdom, that is what we have to talk to them about. If they are content with having limited families, that is what we need to confront them with. Where they are fudging in their religion is where we need to concentrate."<sup>171</sup> It may feel strange and unloving to do this, but our goal is to save them from the grip of Satan. We want them to realize that they are hopeless and are unable to earn their own salvation so that we can give them the true hope that can only be found in the gospel.<sup>172</sup>

### The Gospel

At this point, Mormons are either starting to feel the pressure that their gospel law is placing on them or have been feeling it for a while. They are longing for some way by which they can be saved. Bringing the gospel to them is vitally important, but is a difficult road to travel due to their differences in definitions for gospel words and the JST. However, there are passages that avoid such issues.<sup>173</sup> One such passage is Heb 10:10–8.<sup>174</sup>

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one

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170. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 198.

171. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 196.

172. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 194.

173. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 201.

174. There is one footnote in the LDS-KJV which includes a change of v. 10 in the JST. He moves the "once" to before "of the body of Christ" and removes "for all." However, while this is an important part that we want to show Mormons, that Christ's sacrifice was "for all," our goal is to show them that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient by itself.

sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Here the author of the epistle to the Hebrews makes clear that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for all sins. This can be seen in the words, "we are sanctified...he hath perfected." Pointing out that these are speaking of present and ongoing things will confuse Mormons. They believe that these things will happen, that they still have to wait to be sanctified and perfected.<sup>175</sup> On top of this, they will be feeling beat down by the Law and will know that they are not sanctified or perfect. They have sinned. They know it and we know it. This is where we point them to verses 17 and 18. In verse 17, God has said that he will no longer remember our sins. He will forget them. Verse 18 shows us that he no longer expects an offering for sin.<sup>176</sup> These two verses lead perfectly into talking to them about the truth of forgiveness and repentance.

As stated earlier, for Mormons, forgiveness is something that they have to earn. When they repent they have to do something to be truly repentant. We need them to see the truth about forgiveness. Having them look up forgiveness in the dictionary is a great way to get them to establish that forgiveness doesn't require anything.<sup>177</sup> Then we show them God's forgiveness. Heb 10:17-8 shows that God's forgiveness is freely given. There are no requirements to receive

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175. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 202.

176. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 202.

177. Cares, Speaking the Truth, 204.

it. This will befuddle Mormons. They will be overwhelmed and try to change the subject, especially if you show them things from their prophets.<sup>178</sup>

Your Heavenly Father has promised forgiveness upon total repentance and meeting all the requirements, but that forgiveness is not granted merely for the asking. There must be works-- many works--and an all-out, total surrender, with a great humility and "a broken heart and a contrite spirit."

It depends upon you whether or not you are forgiven, and when. It could be weeks, it could be years, it could be centuries before that happy day when you have the positive assurance that the Lord has forgiven you. That depends on your humility your sincerity, your works, your attitudes.<sup>179</sup>

This contradicts what they know about forgiveness. They will be uncertain about things. We need to stick with them, being patient with them but keeping in contact with them.<sup>180</sup>

Here, Mormons might try and throw us off by pointing to Jas 2, which to them shows that good works are necessary for salvation.<sup>181</sup> They have to do things in order to be saved. We need to be prepared for when they do this. We need to know that what James says does not contradict what Paul says. Jas 2:24 says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," while Ro 3:28 says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." However, James is talking about how we can only show our faith in our works. Therefore, when a Mormon brings this book and chapter up, we should say what Mark J. Cares says, "I'm glad you brought that up. It is one of my favorite chapters. I really like how it explains the relationship between faith and works. Let's look at the example of Abraham in verses 21-24."<sup>182</sup> In verse 23, James makes clear the relationship of faith with works. Abraham's

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178. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 204–5.

179. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 324.

180. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 205.

181. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 207.

182. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 208.

faith, which was earlier in his life credited to him as righteousness, was proven in his act of being ready to sacrifice Isaac.<sup>183</sup> Faith is proven by action. Mark J. Cares suggests a parable as well to show the difference in motivation, which emphasizes that works are a result of faith, between Mormons and Christians.<sup>184</sup> He tells of two couples who come to adopt Little Orphan Andy. The first couple takes him home for a month and tells him that they will only adopt him if this trial run works out for him. The second couple takes him home and tells him that he is already their new son. In both of these Andy does good works for the couples, but in the first, he is very careful and cautious because he wants to be adopted and knows that one mistake could ruin his chances. In the second one, however, he doesn't have to worry. There are no conditions attached to his adoption. He simply is adopted. In this parable, Mormons are the first couple, always being cautious not to lose God's grace. Christians are the second, never worrying that God will abandon them and wanting to do what pleases him.<sup>185</sup>

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183. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 208.

184. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 209.

185. Cares, *Speaking the Truth*, 209.

## CONCLUSION

“Ye shall be as gods.” (Gen 3:5) Though it has been millennia since this lie of Satan had been said, man is still fighting against it. Though it happened in a place long ago destroyed, the lie can still be found today. Mormonism is proof of this. Their plan of salvation by which they might receive exaltation is nothing more than a word salad used to disguise their belief that they will become gods. Their abhorrent abuse of God’s Word to propagate Satan’s lie from the garden causes anger and disgust to grow inside Lutherans. However, we cannot let our desires to defend God’s Word cloud what God’s Word really wants us to do. God does not need us to come to his defense. God does not want us to argue with people about the truth of his word. God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim 2:4)

When we see what Mormons believe about God’s plan of salvation for them, we are moved by compassion for them. They have been deceived that they must save themselves rather than simply trusting in Christ for salvation. We who have been called by the truth of God’s Word are called also to teach this truth in love to the Mormons. We don’t need to argue with them to prove that what they believe is wrong. We simply let God’s Word speak the truth to them and lead them to true salvation which can only be found in Christ alone.



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