

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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After accelerating growth in many parts of the world led to the organization of the First Quorum of Seventy in 1975, the nearly two dozen Assistants then serving became members of that quorum in 1976.

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ASTRONOMY, SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO

Latter-day Saint scriptures indicate that both biblical and latter-day prophets and seers were shown visions of the heavenly realms to orient them to God's dominion and eternal purposes. These visions gave information about (1) the governing of systems of WORLDS and stellar objects; (2) a heliocentric, planetary cosmology; (3) the plurality of worlds; (4) the spiritual and physical CREATION of the EARTH and the universe; and (5) the role of Jesus Christ as creator.

The BOOK OF ABRAHAM states that God's physical dominion (throne) is located near a star called Kolob (Abr. 3:2–3). While it might seem reasonable to suppose that this refers to some distinguishing feature of the universe, all efforts to identify it are speculative and not authoritative. Wherever Kolob is located, its purpose is to "govern" all planets that are of the same "order" as the Earth (Abr. 3:9). Since ABRAHAM says no more than that, it is not clear whether he is speaking physically, metaphorically, or allegorically. Thus, "to govern" might mean a physical bonding as with gravity, while "order" could conceivably mean planets similar to the Earth in size, or planets in the same region of this galaxy or even in the entire Milky Way galaxy. Kolob was also said by the Egyptians to provide the light for all stars, including that for our sun (Abr. Facsimile 2). Even so, Latter-day Saints have made no definitive comment on the meaning of these passages.

In contrast to some interpretations of biblical scholars who attribute a geocentric cosmology to the words of Joshua (10:12–14), Job (9:6–7), Isaiah (38:7–8), and other Old Testament passages, the

Book of Mormon affirms the sun-centered (heliocentric) view accepted by modern planetary physics. The prophets Nephi₂ (Hel. 12:13–15) and Alma₂ agree that "surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun" (Alma 30:44).

Psalm 8:3–4 has been the classic text for discussion of the "plurality of worlds." LDS scriptures give even more direct support for modern astronomers' search for extraterrestrial intelligence. The prophets Enoch, Moses, and Joseph Smith all received revelations dealing with the existence of sentient life on other planets. Moses revealed both the spatial and temporal existence of countless worlds: that God had created "worlds without number," that "many worlds. . . have [already] passed away," and that other worlds are yet to be created (Moses 1:33–38). Joseph Smith received revelations explaining that through Jesus Christ these worlds are created and inhabited (D&C 76:22–24; 93:9–10; Moses 1:33), that all kingdoms are bound by certain LAWS and conditions (D&C 88:36–38, 42–47), and that resurrected beings reside on celestialized planets (D&C 130:4–7).

The various creation accounts in LDS scripture outline a spirit creation of the heavens and the earth that preceded the physical creation, thus affirming the spiritual nature of the cosmos (Moses 2–3; Abr. 4–5); spirit is indeed "matter" of a different order (D&C 131:7–8). While Moses calls creation periods "days," Abraham speaks of "times" and of thousand-year days (Abr. 3:4; 5:13), suggesting a complex physical creation process.

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ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

The atonement of Jesus Christ is the foreordained but voluntary act of the Only Begotten Son of God. He offered his life, including his innocent body, blood, and spiritual anguish as a redeeming ransom (1) for the effect of the fall of Adam upon all

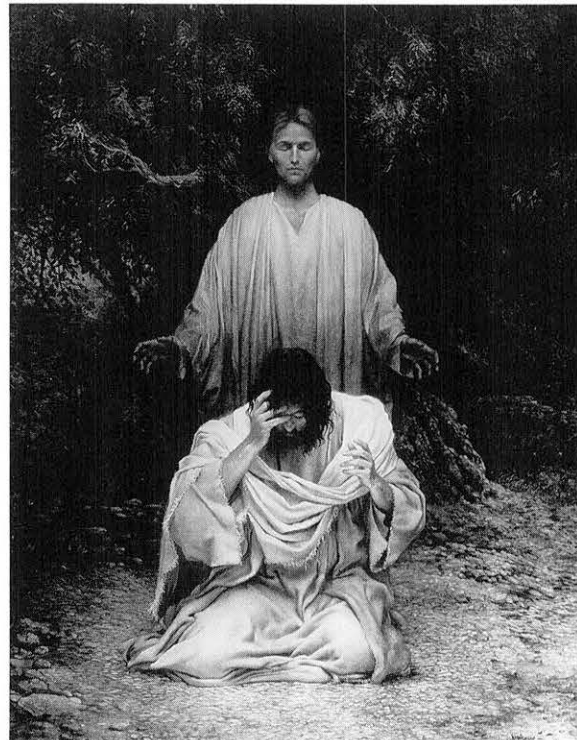
mankind and (2) for the personal sins of all who repent, from Adam to the end of the world. Latter-day Saints believe this is the central fact, the crucial foundation, the chief doctrine, and the greatest expression of divine love in the PLAN OF SALVATION. The Prophet Joseph SMITH declared that all “things which pertain to our religion are only appendages” to the atonement of Christ (*TPJS*, p. 121).

The literal meaning of the word “atonement” is self-evident: at-one-ment, the act of unifying or bringing together what has been separated and estranged. The atonement of Jesus Christ was indispensable because of the separating transgression, or fall, of Adam, which brought death into the world when Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9; 3:1–24). Latter-day Saints readily acknowledge both the physical and the SPIRITUAL DEATH that Adam and Eve brought upon themselves and all of their posterity, physical death bringing the temporary separation of the spirit from the body, and spiritual death bringing the estrangement of both the spirit and the body from God. But they also believe that the Fall was part of a divine, foreordained plan without which mortal children would not have been born to Adam and Eve. Had not these first parents freely chosen to leave the Garden of Eden via their transgression, there would have been on this earth no human family to experience opposition and growth, moral AGENCY and choice, and the joy of RESURRECTION, redemption, and ETERNAL LIFE (2 Ne. 2:23; Moses 5:11).

The need for a future atonement was explained in a premortal COUNCIL IN HEAVEN at which the spirits of the entire human family were in attendance and over which GOD THE FATHER presided. The two principal associates of God in that council were the premortal Jesus (also known as Jehovah; see JESUS CHRIST, JEHOVAH) and the premortal Adam (also known as Michael). It was in this premortal setting that Christ voluntarily entered into a covenant with the Father, agreeing to enhance the moral agency of humankind even as he atoned for their sins, and he returned to the Father all honor and glory for such selflessness. This preordained role of Christ as mediator explains why the book of Revelation describes Christ as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8) and why Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings, including Moses (Deut. 18:15, 17–19), Job (19:25–27), the Psalmist (Ps. 2,

22), Zechariah (9:9; 12:10; 13:6), Isaiah (7:14; 9:6–7; 53), and Micah (5:2), could speak of the Messiah and his divine role many centuries before his physical birth. A Book of Mormon prophet wrote, “I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ” (Jacob 4:4; 7:11). To the brother of Jared who lived some two thousand years before the Redeemer’s birth, the premortal Christ declared, “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people” (Ether 3:14). Such scriptural foreshadowings are reflected in the conversation Christ had with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus: “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27; cf. also 24:44).

For Latter-day Saints, it is crucially important to see the agreed-upon and understood fall of man only in the context of the equally agreed-upon and



Gethsemane, by James C. Christensen (1984, oil on panel, 40" × 44"). Jesus kneels in the Garden of Gethsemane, strengthened by an angel from heaven, as he suffers and atones for the sins of the world (see Luke 22:43). Courtesy James C. Christensen.

understood redemption of man—redemption provided through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Thus, one of the most important and oft-quoted lines of Latter-day Saint scripture says, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall” (2 Ne. 2:25–26).

LDS scripture teaches that the mission of Christ as Redeemer and the commandment to offer animal sacrifice as an anticipatory reminder and symbol of that divine atonement to come were first taught to Adam and Eve soon after they had been expelled from the Garden of Eden (Moses 5:4–8). The atonement of Christ was taught to the parents of the family of man with the intent that they and their posterity would observe the sacrificial ordinances down through their generations, remembering as they did so the mission and mercy of Christ who was to come. Latter-day Saints emphatically teach that the extent of this atonement is universal, opening the way for the redemption of all mankind—non-Christians as well as Christians, the godless as well as the god-fearing, the untaught infant as well as the fully converted and knowledgeable adult. “It is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice,” said Amulek in the Book of Mormon, “an infinite and eternal sacrifice. . . . There can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world” (Alma 34:10, 12).

This infinite atonement of Christ—and of Christ only—was possible because (1) he was the only sinless man ever to live on this earth and therefore was not subject to the spiritual death that comes as a result of sin; (2) he was the Only Begotten of the Father and therefore possessed the attributes of Godhood, which gave him power over physical death (see 2 Ne. 9:5–9; Alma 34:9–12); and (3) he was the only one sufficiently humble and willing in the premortal council to be foreordained there to that service (*JC*, pp. 21–62).

The universal, infinite, and unconditional aspects of the atonement of Jesus Christ are several. They include his ransom for Adam’s original transgression so that no member of the human family is held responsible for that sin (A of F 2; *see ORIGINAL SIN*). Another universal gift is the resurrection from the dead of every man, woman, and child who lives, has ever lived, or ever will live, on the earth. Thus, the Atonement is not only universal in the sense that it saves the entire human fam-

ily from physical death, but it is also infinite in the sense that its impact and efficacy in making redemption possible for all reach back in one direction to the beginning of time and forward in the other direction throughout all eternity. In short, the Atonement has universal, infinite, and unconditional consequences for all mankind throughout the duration of all eternity.

Emphasizing these unconditional gifts arising out of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, Latter-day Saints believe that other aspects of Christ’s gift are conditional upon obedience and diligence in keeping God’s commandments. For example, while members of the human family are freely and universally given a reprieve from Adam’s sin through no effort or action of their own, they are not freely and universally given a reprieve of their own sins unless they pledge faith in Christ, repent of those sins, are baptized in his name, receive the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST and confirmation into Christ’s church, and press forward with a brightness of hope and faithful endurance for the remainder of life’s journey. Of this personal challenge, Christ said, “For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:16–18).

Furthermore, although the breaking of the bonds of mortal death by the resurrection of the body is a free and universal gift from Christ, a product of his victory over death and the grave, the kind or nature of the body (or “degree of glory” of the body), as well as the time of one’s resurrection, is affected very directly by the extent of one’s faithfulness in this life (*see DEGREES OF GLORY*). The apostle Paul made clear, for example, that those most fully committed to Christ will “rise first” in the resurrection (1 Thes. 4:16). Paul also speaks of different orders of resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15:40). The bodies of the highest orders or degrees of glory in the Resurrection are promised to those who faithfully adhere to the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ; they will not only enjoy IMMORTALITY (a universal gift to everyone) but also ETERNAL LIVES in the celestial kingdom of glory (D&C 88:4; 132:24; *see also RESURRECTION*).

Latter-day Saints stress that neither the unconditional nor the conditional blessings of the Atonement would be available to mankind except through the grace and goodness of Christ. Obviously the unconditional blessings of the Atonement are unearned, but the conditional ones are also not fully merited. By living faithfully and keeping the commandments of God, one can receive additional privileges; but they are still given freely, not fully earned. They are always and ever a product of God's grace. Latter-day Saint scripture is emphatic in its declaration that "there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah" (2 Ne. 2:8).

The Church is also emphatic about the salvation of little children, the mentally impaired, those who lived without ever hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, and so forth: these are redeemed by the universal power of the atonement of Christ and will have the opportunity to receive the fulness of the gospel in the SPIRIT WORLD (*see SALVATION FOR THE DEAD*).

To meet the demands of the Atonement, the sinless Christ went first into the Garden of GETHSEMANE, there to bear the spiritual agony of soul only he could bear. He "began to be sorrowful and very heavy," saying to his three chief disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, unto death" (Mark 14:34). Leaving them to keep watch, he went further into the garden, where he would suffer "the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam" (2 Ne. 9:21). There he "struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible" (*JC*, p. 613).

Christ's atonement satisfied the demands of justice and thereby ransomed and redeemed the souls of all men, women, and children "that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12). Thus, Latter-day Saints teach that Christ "descended below all things"—including every kind of sickness, infirmity, and dark despair experienced by every mortal being—in order that he might "comprehend all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth" (D&C 88:6). This spiritual anguish of plumbing the depths of human suffering and sorrow was experienced primarily in the Garden of Gethsemane. It

was there that he was "in an agony" and "prayed more earnestly." It was there that his sweat was "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44) for he bled "at every pore" (D&C 19:18). It was there that he began the final march to Calvary.

The majesty and triumph of the Atonement reached its zenith when, after unspeakable abuse at the hands of the Roman soldiers and others, Christ appealed from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Forgiveness was the key to the meaning of all the suffering he had come to endure.

Such an utterly lonely and excruciating mission is piercingly expressed in that near-final and most agonizing cry of all, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). In the depths of that anguish, even nature itself convulsed, "and there was a darkness over all the earth. . . . The sun was darkened. . . . And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Luke 23:43–45; Matt. 27:51–52). Finally, even the seemingly unbearable had been borne and Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), and then, saying "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he "gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46). Latter-day Saints believe that every tongue will someday, somewhere confess as did a Roman centurion at the Crucifixion, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54).

"The Savior thus becomes master of the situation—the debt is paid, the redemption made, the covenant fulfilled, justice satisfied, the will of God done, and all power is now given into the hands of the Son of God—the power of the resurrection, the power of the redemption, the power of salvation. . . . He becomes the author of eternal life and exaltation. He is the Redeemer, the Resurrector, the Savior of man and the world" (Taylor, p. 171). Furthermore, his atonement extends to all life—beasts, fish, fowl, and the earth itself.

To the thoughtful woman and man, it is "a matter of surpassing wonder" (*AF*, p. 77) that the voluntary and merciful sacrifice of a single being could satisfy the infinite and eternal demands of justice, atone for every human transgression and misdeed, and thereby sweep all mankind into the encompassing arms of his merciful embrace. A President and prophet of the LDS Church writing on this subject said:

In some mysterious, incomprehensible way, Jesus assumed the responsibility which naturally would have devolved upon Adam; but which could only be accomplished through the mediation of Himself, and by taking upon Himself their sorrows, assuming their responsibilities, and bearing their transgressions or sins. In a manner to us incomprehensible and inexplicable, He bore the weight of the sins of the whole world, not only of Adam, but of his posterity; and in doing that opened the kingdom of heaven, not only to all believers and all who obeyed the law of God, but to more than one-half of the human family who die before they come to years of maturity as well as to the heathen, who having died without law, will, through His mediation, be resurrected without law, and be judged without law, and thus participate . . . in the blessings of His atonement [Taylor, pp. 148–49].

Latter-day Saints sing a favorite hymn, written by Charles H. Gabriel, that expresses their deepest feelings regarding this greatest of all gifts:

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,
Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me.

I tremble to know that for me he was crucified,

That for me, a sinner, he suffered, He bled and died.

Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me
Enough to die for me!

Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!
[Hymns, No. 193].

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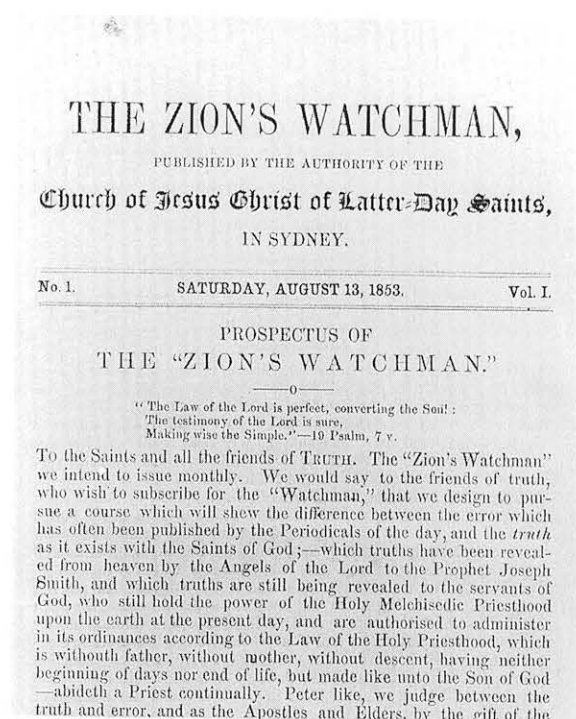
JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

AUSTRALIA, THE CHURCH IN

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was introduced into Australia when a seventeen-year-old British convert, William James Barratt,

emigrated from England to Adelaide in November 1840. He had been ordained an elder by George A. Smith, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who instructed him to share the gospel whenever he could. Barratt, whose descendants still live in the Adelaide area, eventually drifted away from the Church, but not until after he had baptized Robert Beauchamp, probably the first Australian convert. Beauchamp later became president of the Australian mission. Andrew and Elizabeth Anderson, also British converts, immigrated to Wellington, near Dubbo, New South Wales, with their three children in 1841. Anderson baptized several converts and in 1844 organized the first Australian BRANCH of the Church, in Wellington.

Official LDS missionary work did not begin in Australia until John Murdock and Charles W. Wandell arrived in Sydney from Utah on October 30, 1851. Thereafter, the Church grew slowly in Australia until President David O. MCKAY visited the area in 1955 and authorized construction of meetinghouses for the branches. The first Austra-



Beginning in 1853, Church leaders in Sydney, Australia, published a monthly periodical entitled *The Zion's Watchman*, addressed "To the Saints and all the friends of Truth." Courtesy Rare Books and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University.