

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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

Macmillan Publishing Company  
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada  
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International  
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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homes and communities, and refined themselves. Leaders might complain of their wayward meeting attendance or inattention to detail. Yet their community building, at least in a broad sense, was a sacral experience that revealed their formidable religious energy and devotion.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Though no comprehensive survey of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint worship exists, several narrower studies are especially helpful. Consult Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, "The Nineteenth Century Ward," in *The Mormon Experience*, pp. 206–219, New York, 1979; Joseph Heinerman, "The Mormon Meetinghouse: Reflections of Pioneer Religious and Social Life in Salt Lake City," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (Fall 1982):340–53; and Ronald W. Walker, "'Going to Meeting' in Salt Lake City's Thirteenth Ward, 1849–1881: A Microanalysis," in *New Views of Mormon History*, ed. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, pp. 138–61, Salt Lake City, 1987. For an example of Temple Square preaching rhetoric, see Ronald W. Walker, "Raining Pitchforks: Brigham Young as Preacher," *Sunstone* 8 (May–June 1983):4–9.

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## PLAN OF SALVATION, PLAN OF REDEMPTION

Latter-day Saints believe that eons ago, GOD, in his infinite wisdom and never-ending mercy, formulated a plan whereby his children could experience a physical existence, including mortality, and then return to live in his presence in eternal felicity and glory. This plan, alternately called "the plan of salvation" (Jarom 1:2; Alma 42:5; Moses 6:62), "the plan of redemption" (Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25; 42:11), and the "great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8), provided both the way and the means for everyone to receive SALVATION and gain ETERNAL LIFE. Eternal life is God's greatest gift to his children (D&C 6:13), and the plan of salvation is his way of making it available to them. Although the term "plan of salvation" is used repeatedly in latter-day scripture, it does not occur in the Bible, though the doctrines pertaining to it are discoverable in its pages.

The Father is the author of the plan of salvation; JESUS CHRIST is its chief advocate; the HOLY SPIRIT helps carry it out, communicating God's will to men and helping them live properly.

**THE PREMORTAL EXISTENCE.** Latter-day Saints believe that all humans are spirit children of heavenly parents (*see* GOD THE FATHER; MOTHER IN HEAVEN), and they dwelt with them prior to BIRTH on this earth (Heb. 12:9; cf. Jer. 1:5; Eph. 1:4). In that PREMORTAL LIFE, or FIRST ESTATE, those spirit children could not progress fully. They needed a PHYSICAL BODY in order to have a fulness of joy (D&C 93:33–34), and the spirits also needed to be placed in an environment where, by the exercise of AGENCY, they could prove their willingness to keep God's commandments (Abr. 3:25). On the other hand, if they succumbed to TEMPTATION, they would be shut out from God's presence, for "no unclean thing can dwell with God" (1 Ne. 10:21; Eph. 5:5). To bring those who yielded to temptation back into God's presence, a plan of redemption had to be set in place, and this required a redeemer.

A COUNCIL IN HEAVEN was held of all the spirits, and two individuals volunteered to serve as the redeemer. One was Lucifer, a son of the morning (Isa. 14:12; D&C 76:26), who said he would "redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost," but they would have no choice in the matter. Their agency would be destroyed (Moses 4:1–3). Such a proposal was out of harmony with the plan of the Father, for the agency of mankind is an absolute prerequisite to progress. JEHOVAH, the premortal Jesus Christ, had first stepped forward and volunteered to give his life as payment for all SINS. He set no plan or conditions of his own, but said, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). He was selected by the Father.

When Lucifer would not accept the Father's choice, a WAR IN HEAVEN ensued, and he was cast out for rebellion (Moses 4:3; D&C 76:25), along with those who followed him, numbering about a third of the spirits (Rev. 12:4, 7–9; D&C 29:36–38). After Satan's expulsion, the Father's plan was carried forward. Three events ordained and instituted by God before the creation of the Earth constitute the foundation stones upon which the plan of salvation rests. These are the CREATION, the FALL OF ADAM, and the ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST. "These three divine events—the three pillars of eternity—are inseparably woven together into one grand tapestry known as the eternal plan of salvation" (McConkie, p. 81).

**THE CREATION.** One of the purposes for creating this earth was for God's spirit children to obtain

physical bodies and learn to walk by FAITH. Earth life is the SECOND ESTATE. The scriptures teach that by the power of his Only Begotten Son, the Father has created “worlds without number” (Moses 1:33; cf. John 1:3; Heb. 1:2), but the Lord has revealed to us detailed information only about this world (Moses 1:40).

Ecclesiastes states that “whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever” (Eccl. 3:14). God does not work for temporal ends (D&C 29:34–35). The scriptures specify that when God created the earth, it was in a paradisiacal and deathless state. If ADAM and EVE had not transgressed and fallen, “all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained for ever, and had no end” (2 Ne. 2:22; cf. Moses 3:9; DS, pp. 75–77).

**THE FALL.** An earth in a deathless and paradisiacal state did not fulfill conditions needed for the progression of God’s children (*see* PURPOSE OF EARTH LIFE). The Book of Mormon gives some reasons why the Fall was part of the foreordained plan of God. Agency is of paramount importance in the proving process. Critical to agency are choices or alternatives. LEHI taught that “there must needs be an opposition in all things” (2 Ne. 2:11). But in the state in which Adam and Eve found themselves, there was no such opposition. They had physical bodies, but were in a state of innocence. There was no death, sin, sorrow, or pain. Furthermore, in that state they would have had no children (2 Ne. 2:22–23). It appears that a major reason Lucifer and his followers had access to those on earth is the necessity that everyone be enticed by both good and evil (2 Ne. 2:16).

Eve was beguiled by Satan to partake of the forbidden fruit, exercised her agency and did so. Adam also chose to partake, realizing that if he did not, Eve and he would be separated and the command to multiply and replenish the earth would be thwarted. Therefore, “Adam fell that men might be” (2 Ne. 2:25). “With the eating of the ‘forbidden fruit,’ Adam and Eve became mortal, sin entered, blood formed in their bodies, and death became a part of life. . . . After Adam fell, the whole creation fell and became mortal. Adam’s fall brought both physical and spiritual death into the world upon all mankind” (Bible Dictionary, p. 670; DS 1:77; Hel. 14:16–17; *see also* SPIRITUAL DEATH). Later, both Adam and Eve rejoiced in the opportunities

that had come to them because of the fall (Moses 5:10–11).

The Fall was part of God’s plan for mankind and came as no surprise. “All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things” (2 Ne. 2:24). Latter-day Saints affirm that Adam and Eve were actual beings, the first parents, and that the Fall was a literal event both in time and place. Elder Joseph Fielding SMITH explained, “If Adam did not fall, there was no Christ, because the atonement of Jesus Christ is based on the fall of Adam” (DS 1:120). Elder James E. Talmage wrote, “It has become a common practice with mankind to heap reproaches on the progenitors of the family, and to picture the supposedly blessed state in which we would be living but for the fall; whereas our first parents are entitled to our deepest gratitude for their legacy to posterity” (AF, p. 70).

**THE ATONEMENT.** The Atonement is the crowning phase of the plan of salvation, without which all else would have been without purpose and all would have been lost. Atonement literally means “at-one-ment” and carries the idea of reconciliation, or the reuniting, of the human family with Heavenly Father. Understanding reconciliation necessitates an examination of the operation of the laws of JUSTICE AND MERCY.

God’s perfect love, patience, long-suffering, and care for humanity’s eternal welfare are the manifestations of his mercy. God is also just and so cannot look upon sin with the “least degree of allowance” (Alma 45:16). Perfect justice requires that every violation of God’s law be punished and every act of obedience to the law be rewarded or blessed (D&C 130:20–21). Mercy and justice are basic to God’s nature, and neither can be ignored. If the demands of justice were the only consideration and mercy ignored, no one could come back into God’s presence, for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). If God were to excuse sin, then mercy would rob justice. Such cannot be. “What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God” (Alma 42:25).

In the atonement of Jesus Christ, justice and mercy are combined to bring about the plan of redemption. As the Only Begotten Son of a divine Father and a mortal mother (*see* MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS), Jesus was subject to the effects of the fall of Adam (mortality, temptation, pain, etc.), but had the power to live a perfect, sinless life (Heb.

3:15; D&C 45:4) and to lay down his life and take it up again (John 5:26; 10:17). In LDS doctrine, the miraculous conception and VIRGIN BIRTH of Jesus Christ are accepted as literally true and absolutely essential to the working of the plan of salvation. Because of his sinless life, justice had no claim on him. Because of his infinite, divine power, he could pay the price of sin for all of God's children and satisfy justice in their behalf (D&C 45:3–5). His was not a human sacrifice, but an infinite, eternal sacrifice (Alma 34:40). He atoned not only for the fall of Adam but also for the individual sins of every person. He extends forgiveness to everyone upon the condition of repentance.

In Gethsemane, Christ took upon himself the burden of the sins of the world and suffered for them in a way that is incomprehensible to mortals. “He suffereth 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). This incomprehensible agony was so intense that it caused Jesus, “even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:18; Mosiah 3:7; cf. Luke 22:42). Because he had power over death, Jesus endured (*JC*, p. 613). The shame, suffering, trials, scourging, and crucifixion were such that a mortal, finite being cannot fathom the price required before the Redeemer could say, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). God's great plan of redemption was implemented, and justice was not robbed by mercy, but rather was *paid* in full by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. This payment for everyone's sins is called the grace of Jesus Christ. Without it, all stand condemned to eternal damnation. Hence, NEPHI<sub>1</sub> declared, “It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23). Paul also taught the doctrine of salvation by grace (Eph. 2:8–9)—that is, without Christ's atonement, nothing any mortal could do would suffice.

Some aspects of Christ's atonement are unconditional. All mortal beings will be resurrected and brought back into the presence of God for the judgment regardless of the kind of lives they have lived (1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Ne. 9:12–15; Hel. 14:16–17), thus redeeming all humankind from both the mortal and spiritual deaths occasioned by the fall of Adam. Another unconditional aspect of Christ's mercy applies to young children who are not capable of understanding the difference between good and evil and therefore are not accountable. They cannot sin or be tempted of Satan (D&C 29:47;

Moro. 8:8). “They are all alive in [Christ] because of his mercy” (Moro. 8:19; cf. D&C 29:46). LDS doctrine states that all children who die before the age of ACCOUNTABILITY (age eight) are saved in the CELESTIAL KINGDOM (D&C 137:10). Mercy extends also to those who through mental handicaps do not reach the mental age of eight, the level of accountability (D&C 29:50).

However, for those who are mentally accountable, part of their estrangement from God is the direct result of their own sins, in addition to Adam's transgression. Unless something is done in their behalf, they will not be allowed to return to the presence of God after their judgment, for no unclean thing can enter there (1 Ne. 10:21). The Lord has set in place certain principles and ORDINANCES called the gospel, which must be followed to have Christ's full atoning power applied to one's own sins: (1) FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, (2) REPENTANCE, (3) BAPTISM by immersion for the remission of sins by one having AUTHORITY, and (4) the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST by the LAYING ON of hands (*see* ARTICLES OF FAITH). Paul and others emphasized that humans are saved by GRACE and not by their own WORKS (Eph. 2:8). This is true because no mortals can work perfectly enough to save themselves. No mortals have, or can have, the power to overcome the effects of the fall of Adam, or even their own sins. Everyone must depend on the atoning blood of the Savior for salvation. With equal clarity and firmness, the Savior and his servants have taught that how people live is a condition for bringing the power of the Atonement to bear in their own lives. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of the Father” (Matt. 5:21). “The hearers of the law are [not] just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom. 1:18; 2:13). “They which do [the works of the flesh] shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). “Behold, [Christ] offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered” (2 Ne. 2:7).

THE SPIRIT WORLD AND THE THREE DEGREES OF GLORY. When mortals complete their sojourn on earth and pass through the portal called death, they enter the postmortal SPIRIT WORLD. As part of the plan of salvation, the Lord set a time between death and the RESURRECTION when men



and women can continue their progression and further learn principles of perfection before they are brought to the final judgment (Alma 40:6–21). Jesus Christ went to the postmortal spirit world while his body lay in the tomb to preach the gospel to them (1 Pet. 3:19–20; 4:6; D&C 138:11–37) so that those spirits in the postmortal spirit world could hear and accept or reject the gospel. Since baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, temple endowment, and SEALING are earthly ordinances, Latter-day Saints perform the ordinances vicariously for the dead in their temples (*see* SALVATION FOR THE DEAD). Because individuals differ so widely in their obedience to God’s commandments, LDS theology rejects the traditional Christian concepts of the single option of heaven or hell in explaining the final destiny of souls (*see* SOUL). Through a vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 76), the Lord has shown, as he also revealed to Paul, that there are several DEGREES OF GLORY in mankind’s eternal reward (D&C 76; cf. 1 Cor. 15:42).

The plan of salvation was created by the Father, brought into reality by the atoning sacrifice of his Beloved Son, and facilitated by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It embraces the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement, including the Resurrection, and sweeps across all time from the premortal existence to the final state of IMMORTALITY and eternal life.

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## PLATES, METAL

[*The Book of Mormon mentions several records, most of which were inscribed on metal plates. The text of the Book of Mormon was inscribed on metal plates; see Book of Mormon Plates and Records; Book of Mormon: The Words of Mormon; and Gold Plates. In addition, the scriptural record possessed by the Book of Mormon colony that fled Jerusalem and came to the Americas under the leadership of the prophet Lehi was engraved on plates of brass; see Book of Mormon: An Overview. This*

*colony continued to prepare metal plates, which were then used to inscribe records both sacred and secular; see Book of Mormon Economy and Technology. It is also known that a prophet named Ether inscribed on metal leaves the record of his people, the earliest Book of Mormon group to migrate to the Western Hemisphere; see Book of Mormon: Book of Ether and Jaredites. The final set of plates abridged by Mormon were seen by the Book of Mormon Witnesses. For information about the major writers or abridgers of these plates, see Mormon; Moroni<sub>2</sub>; Mosiah<sub>2</sub>; and Nephi<sub>1</sub>.]*

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## PLURAL MARRIAGE

Plural marriage was the nineteenth-century LDS practice of a man marrying more than one wife. Popularly known as polygamy, it was actually polygyny. Although polygamy had been practiced for much of history in many parts of the world, to do so in “enlightened” America in the nineteenth century was viewed by most as incomprehensible and unacceptable, making it the Church’s most controversial and least understood practice. Though the principle was lived for a relatively brief period, it had profound impact on LDS self-definition, helping to establish the Latter-day Saints as a “people apart.” The practice also caused many nonmembers to distance themselves from the Church and see Latter-day Saints more negatively than would otherwise have been the case.

Rumors of plural marriage among the members of the Church in the 1830s and 1840s led to persecution, and the public announcement of the practice after August 29, 1852, in Utah gave enemies a potent weapon to fan public hostility against the Church. Although Latter-day Saints believed that their religiously-based practice of plural marriage was protected by the U.S. Constitution, opponents used it to delay Utah statehood until 1896. Ever harsher ANTIPOLYGAMY LEGISLATION stripped Latter-day Saints of their rights as citizens, disincorporated the Church, and permitted the seizure of Church property before the MANIFESTO OF 1890 announced the discontinuance of the practice.

Plural marriage challenged those within the Church, too. Spiritual descendants of the Puritans and sexually conservative, early participants in plural marriage first wrestled with the prospect and then embraced the principle only after receiving personal spiritual confirmation that they should do so.