

What Mormons Believe: An Analysis of the Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) from a Christian Perspective

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On the surface, the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon Church) vary slightly from Christianity, yet appear to be in line with the Bible on most issues and are therefore 'safe'. The LDS Church seems to be just one of the many denominations with whom a born-again Christian may fellowship, worship, and study the Word of God. However, when the teachings of the LDS Church are examined in detail and compared with the Word of God as found in the Bible, it becomes clear that LDS and Christian beliefs are not only in opposition on several major points, but are mutually exclusive. It is impossible to accept one without rejecting the other. Jesus said that a man cannot serve two masters (Luke 16:13; Matthew 6:24), therefore, heed the words of Joshua and "choose this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15).

Standards for Prophecy and Scripture

The Bible offers many warnings of false prophets and false teachers bringing new doctrines and gospels that vary from the teachings of Jesus Christ. Christians are told that "such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Paul warns that "there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:7-8). Peter states that "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). Jesus himself warned to "[b]eware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

The Bible also instructs us to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). How then are we to "try the spirits" and what standards are given to know if they are of God? The Bible says, "And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Paul commends the Bereans saying, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). He tells

Timothy, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:14-16). Peter assures us that "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The Bible ends with the warning, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19). This echoes the words of the Lord saying, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). From these passages we can extract the following:

1. True prophets give accurate prophecies; unfulfilled prophecy is a sign of a false prophet.
2. All teaching should be compared to the Scriptures to see if it is true.
3. The Scriptures are inspired of God and suitable for doctrine, teaching, etc.
4. The Scriptures will last forever.
5. No one is to add to or take away from the Scriptures.

Christians believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God and this is our only scripture. The LDS Church states that they "believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly" (Article 8 of the Articles of Faith of the LDS Church). The LDS Church publishes and distributes copies of the King James Version of the Bible so all scripture quoted in this article is taken from the King James Version.

One major difference between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Christian Church can be seen in the selection or canonization of scripture. Article 8 of the Articles of Faith states that they "believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." The copy of the King James Version of the Bible published by the LDS Church states, "The scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints consist of the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price." Joseph Smith, founder of the LDS Church, claims that the reason for these additional scriptures is a 'Great Apostasy' that took place in the Church after the death of the last of the Apostles. This resulted in the misinterpretation of scripture and corruption of the gospel. The Book of Mormon says, "And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fullness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God. Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God. And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the formation of the great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have

taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (1 Nephi 13:24-26). In the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith writes that he asked God which church he should join. He says, "I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt" (Joseph Smith 2:19).

From the scriptures already covered it is clear that the words of Jesus "shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Furthermore, Jesus addressed Peter saying, "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 13:18). Before ascending into heaven, Jesus said to his disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20). These statements make it clear that Jesus did not intend to let the Word of God be corrupted.

Although the Bible makes it plain that the Word of God would prevail, making a new revelation of scripture unnecessary, it would be worthwhile to examine the Book of Mormon and other LDS 'scriptures' to see if they meet a minimum standard for judging scripture. There is much to be said of the questionable events and the accounts of those events surrounding the 'revelation' and 'translation' of the Book of Mormon, however, this is a subject that is covered in detail in such books as *The Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin and *The Gospel According to Joseph Smith: A Christian Response to Mormon Teaching* by Ethan Harris so I won't go into it here. In analyzing the LDS scripture, it is necessary to establish some standards. We have already seen that the words of a true prophet must come to pass (Deuteronomy 18:21-22) and Jesus said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth" (Luke 11:17). God said, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it" (Isaiah 55:11). From these scriptures we can conclude:

1. Scripture will come to pass; it will not return void.
2. Scripture must agree with other scripture.

We will examine some LDS prophecies and doctrines to see if they meet these standards.

In a "Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirkland, Ohio, September 22 and 23, 1832" it was predicted that the Lord's church would be "established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem. Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased. Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation. For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house" (Doctrine and Covenants

84:2-5). This 'prophecy' was given over 170 years ago and all of that generation has passed away. Joseph Smith died in 1844 and the temple has not been built on that lot. Joseph Smith was the first president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The president of the church is also a 'prophet' and his words are to be considered as scripture. In a "Revelation given to Joseph Smith" by God, speaking of the prophet of the LDS Church, the Doctrine and Covenants says, "For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (Doctrine and Covenants 21:5). Brigham Young was the second Prophet or President of the LDS Church, serving from 1847-1877. In a speech given while serving as Prophet in 1863 Brigham Young prophesied that the Civil War would not free the slaves.

"What is the cause of all this waste of life and treasure? To tell it in a plain, truthful way, one portion of the country wish to praise their negroes or black slaves, and the other portion wish to free them, and, apparently, to almost worship them. Well, praise and worship them, who cares? I should never fight one moment about it, for the cause of human improvement is not in the least advanced by the dreadful war which now convulses our unhappy] country.

"Ham will continue to be the servant of servants, as the Lord has decreed, until the curse is removed. Will the present struggle free the slave? No; but they are now wasting away the black race by thousands. Many of the blacks are treated worse than we treat our dumb brutes; and men will be called to judgment for the way they have treated the negro, and they will receive the condemnation of a guilty conscience, by the just Judge whose tributes are justice and truth (Journal of Discourses 10:250).

These are only two examples of several unfulfilled prophecies issued by the prophets of the LDS Church. Several examples of conflicting scriptures from the Book of Mormon and other LDS 'Standard Works' will be given below. Since the Bible states clearly that God's words will not return void and that prophets whose prophesies don't come to pass are not to be believed, the inevitable conclusion is that the words of Joseph Smith and the other prophets of the LDS Church are not the words of God and are not to be believed.

The Nature of God

For members of different religions to join together in worship, they must worship the same deity. This is especially true of a monotheistic people such as Christians. People who believe in only one true God cannot in clear conscience join with other religions in worshiping other gods. This is another subject where the LDS doctrines are radically different from Christian beliefs. Christians believe in one God, the LDS Church believes in many gods. Christians believe in the Trinity (one God in three persons) while the LDS Church believes that the Godhead consists of three distinct deities united "in purpose and in thought", but separate "in physical fact" (Rosten 189). Christians believe that God is a supernatural being and not human, but the LDS Church believes that God "is an exalted Man" (Journal of Discourses 6:3) with a "body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). Christians believe that God has always been God and He never changes, but the LDS Church teaches that God had to learn how to be God "by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one, - from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation" (Journal of Discourses 6:3).

The Bible is very clear in stating that there is only one true God. The Lord said, "understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isaiah 43:10). He also said, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). These statements are echoed in Isaiah 44:8; 45:5-6; and 46:9.

The LDS doctrine on this matter is in direct conflict with the Word of God. They teach that there is some ambiguity in this matter and "whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:28). Joseph Smith taught that there was a "Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:32). The LDS Church believes "if a man marry a wife" by the word of God and "by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed" they "shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths" and if they keep the covenant "and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood ... [t]hen shall they be gods, because they have no end" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20). In this same "Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet" the LDS Church teaches that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "did none other things than that which they were commanded" and therefore "entered into their exaltation, according to the promises" and they now "sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:37). Others who are less faithful are not given this great reward. In this same "Revelation of Joseph Smith" God says, "For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:17).

LDS scriptures do quote the Bible concerning this polytheistic teaching saying, "it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:58). The passage referred to here is found in Psalms 82. The Bible says, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods" (Psalms 82:1). The passage goes on to say, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High" (Psalms 82:6). It is important to note that the word 'gods' in these passages comes from the Hebrew word 'elohiym'. When used in the plural form this word would be more accurately translated as judges or magistrates, however, it could refer to 'sons of God' or angels. The text goes on to inform these 'gods' that they will die like men because they have judged unjustly. The writer pleads for God himself to judge the earth. The internal evidence indicates that the term in question does, in fact, denote judges and not divine beings or 'gods' in the sense referred to in the Doctrine and Covenants of the LDS Church.

Another passage from the Bible used to support the LDS polytheistic beliefs comes from the Gospel of John. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:34-36). It is important to understand that Jesus is quoting Psalms 82:6 to undermine the claim of his accusers that he has committed blasphemy. He is pointing out that if the word 'gods' can be applied to judges or magistrates as a term of honor, it is not unlawful for the Son of God to claim his rightful title. Nowhere in this passage does Jesus indicate that there is any deity besides the one true God. A similar passage is found in 1 Corinthians. Paul states, "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth,

(as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). It is important to note that the Greek word 'theos' is used here. This word can be translated in much the same way as the Hebrew word 'elohiym', meaning magistrate or judge. It can also refer to angels or other spirit beings and is the word used to describe the gods of Greek mythology. Paul makes it clear in this passage that "there is but one God."

Although it is clear that LDS teachings of multiple gods and the notion that humans can become gods is a direct contradiction of the Word of God, even the LDS scriptures do not agree on this point. The Book of Mormon says, "And Zeezrom said unto him: Thou sayest there is a true and living God. And Amulek said: Yea, there is a true and living God. Now Zeezrom said: is there more than one God? And he answered no. Now Zeezrom said unto him again: How knowest thou these things? And he said: An angel hath made them known unto me" (Alma 11:26-31). According to the standards for judging scripture found in the Bible, scripture must agree with scripture. If any doctrine is given that does not agree with the Word of God and is not consistent in its own teaching, it must be false.

The Bible is clear in stating that there is only one God. What is the nature of this God? Is he human? The Bible says, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent" (Numbers 23:19). God says, "I am God, and not man" (Hosea 11:9). The New Testament says, "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). This does not support the LDS claim that "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted Man" (Journal of Discourses 6:3) or that "[t]he Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). And does God change? The Lord said, "I change not" (Malachi 3:6). Even the Book of Mormon states that God is unchanging. "For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity" (Moroni 8:18). And this is supported by other LDS scriptures. "By these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:17). Inspired scripture cannot contradict itself, yet the LDS prophets have had 'revelations' that contradict their other 'revelations' and teach doctrines that disagree with the Word of God. The LDS prophets are not the first to teach that men can become gods. A record of the origin of this doctrine can be found in the Bible. "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 3:4-5). The words of Satan spoken through the serpent, offering to make humans into gods and declaring God to be a liar, are frighteningly similar to those of Joseph Smith, the founder and first prophet of the LDS Church:

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

"In order to understand the subject of the dead, for the consolation of those who mourn for the loss of their friends, it is necessary that we should understand the character and being of God, and how he came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity, I will refute that idea, and will take away and do away the vail [sic], so that you may see (Journal of Discourses 6:3).

This is the same sort of teaching that Paul warned of in 2 Corinthians, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

If there is only one God, how can Christians speak of God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit? The answer is the Trinity. There is one God, but he reveals himself in three persons. Isaiah predicted the birth of a child who would also be called the everlasting Father. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). The Gospel of John tells us that the Father and Son are one. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The LDS Church claims to agree with this view, however, as they explain their understanding of the Godhead it becomes clear that their doctrine is not the Christian understanding of the Trinity. The LDS view of the Trinity is that the Godhead consists of "three literal, distinct personalities: God the Father; His Son, Jesus the Christ (who is one with the Father in purpose and in thought, but separate from him in physical fact); and the Holy Ghost, a Personage of the spirit" (Rosten 189). To support this view they point to scriptures such as Acts 7:55 and Hebrews 1:3 which state that Jesus is at the right hand of God. It seems that this scripturally inaccurate view of the Godhead stems from an inability to accept a belief in a God that defies human understanding. The Bible says, "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding" (Isaiah 40:28). Although it is difficult for man to understand how one God can manifest himself in three different forms, all things are possible for God.

It is interesting to note that LDS scriptures seem to accept the Trinity, even if this doctrine is not taught by the LDS Church. The Book of Mormon says, "the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one" (3 Nephi 11:27) and this is echoed in 2 Nephi 31:21 and 3 Nephi 11:36. LDS scriptures also state that the Father and Son are the same. "For if there be no Christ there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a God, and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fullness of his own time" (2 Nephi 11:7). Similar statements are made in Mosiah 15:2-5; Mosiah 16:15; and 2 Nephi 26:12). The Testimony of Three Witnesses found at the beginning of the Book of Mormon concludes with this statement: "And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen." It is clear, once again, that LDS teaching does not agree with the Word of God. Their doctrines do not, in fact, agree with each other. The LDS Church does not worship the one and

only true God of the Bible. They believe in many gods and the God they worship is merely "an exalted Man."

Salvation and the Gospel

Another important issue in Christianity is the [plan of salvation](#). Christians believe that although humans were [created in God's image](#), Adam and Eve sinned, bringing sin and death into the world. Because of this, all people have a sin nature (Romans 5:12). This makes it impossible for us to be close to God or enter into the kingdom of heaven. Without intervention, humans would be doomed to spend eternity in torment, separated from God (Romans 6:23). For this reason, God sent Jesus, His only begotten Son, into the world to take on a human body and give Himself as a sacrifice for our sins (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3). If we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, accepting by faith this gift of salvation and repenting of our sins, we will spend eternity in paradise with God (John 3:16; Romans 6:23). We are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to demonstrate to others that we have made a commitment to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38). We pray for and receive the gift of the filling or baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17; 38; 19:6). We love God and are therefore willing to live our lives according to the standards, guidelines, and examples of the Bible. These are all expressions of our willingness to follow Christ, not the way to salvation (Matthew 5:16; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:5-9; 1 John 5:2-3). Salvation comes by faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the grace of God which provides the gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-9).

To understand salvation, it is necessary to know why salvation is required. This is one point where Christian and LDS beliefs differ. Article 2 of the LDS Articles of Faith states, "We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression." This seems to be an attempt to refute the Christian belief of a sin nature. However, this is a misrepresentation of Christian teaching. Christians do believe that Adam and Eve brought sin into the world when they disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, but each person will be judged and punished for his/her own sin. The problem is that humans are born with a sin nature and must be saved, even if they don't think they've done anything wrong. The Bible says that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Romans goes on to say, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). In the book of Psalms it is written that "[t]he wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Psalms 58:3).

Latter-day Saints teach that some people are not guilty of sin. They claim that a person is not guilty of breaking the law if they are ignorant of it. The Book of Mormon says, "Yea, and I know that good and evil have come before all men; he that knoweth not good from evil is blameless; but he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires, whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience" (Alma 29:5).

The Bible teaches that ignorance is not an excuse. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath

shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20).

Since the Bible leaves no doubt that everyone needs salvation, no matter how good they may be, let's see how salvation works. Are we saved by something that we do? When a jailer asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). It is difficult for people to believe, but it is that simple. Unfortunately, some people want to add further conditions to the gift of salvation that God has given us freely. The LDS Church teaches that people must work to earn their salvation. Article 3 of the Articles of Faith states that "through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

At this point it must be made clear that LDS teaching refers to two distinct forms of salvation, one universal and one individual. They believe that all people will receive a new eternal body and are therefore saved from death. This happens for everyone, even if they choose not to accept a personal cleansing of sin and 'spiritual advancement' or exaltation. They teach that "[w]hile 'salvation' is universal, 'exaltation' (with the highest eternal opportunities) must be earned by obedience to the laws, ordinances, and commandments of the Kingdom" (Rosten 192). According to the Doctrine and Covenants of the LDS Church, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:37). According to Brigham Young, "keeping the commandments of God will cleanse away the stain of sin" (Journal of Discourses 2:29).

The Word of God describes a very different [plan of salvation](#). Paul teaches that "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" (Ephesians 2:8-9) and "[t]herefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). He goes on to say, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:27-28). Paul has harsh words for the Galatians concerning this same issue:

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? If it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministered to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident for, The just

shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:1-11).

Paul writes in Titus, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being heirs according to the hope of eternal lives. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:5-9).

In discussing the question of salvation through faith or works, it is important to mention the book of James. People often read the verse that says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (James 2:21) and conclude that James is presenting a different plan of salvation than Paul's teaching that believers are saved by faith. A close reading of the book of James, however, reveals that this is not the case. The next verse states that "by works faith was made perfect" (James 2:22). James also teaches that Christians should be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). To illustrate his point, James gives this example: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:15-17). James is telling the church that they must act on their faith or it doesn't do anyone any good. He is not presenting a works based plan of salvation. He goes on to reassert the importance of faith in salvation by saying, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:15). James echoes the teaching of Paul that "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Knowing that humans are not capable of keeping the law in its entirety, he assures us that "he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). While James teaches that believers should allow their faith to manifest itself in their actions, he never alters from the teaching that salvation is a free gift from God and he acknowledges the power of Jesus Christ to forgive our sins.

The LDS plan of salvation includes other conditions. One of these conditions is baptism. While Christians believe that baptism is an important act as an outward sign to others of a commitment to God, it is not required for salvation. LDS teaching quotes the Bible to support the claim that baptism is required for the forgiveness of sin. The Bible does say, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The Greek word 'eis' is translated here as 'for', but it is more accurately translated as 'to' or 'into' and could also mean 'unto', 'in', 'on', 'toward', 'against', etc.

This passage would then read "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ into the remission of sins." Acts also says, "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). The Bible also says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). A prime example of salvation without baptism is the thief on the cross. "And Jesus said unto him,

Verily I say unto thee. Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). This man died next to Jesus on the cross without an opportunity to be baptized, yet Jesus reassured him that he had been saved and would receive eternal life.

The plan of salvation taught by the LDS Church includes other conditions such as Celestial Marriage. While there is insufficient space in this article to address these other issues, they are clearly not present in the plan of salvation presented in the Bible.

Conclusion

To believe the LDS teachings, it would be necessary to reject portions of the Word of God in favor of the inconsistent teachings of Joseph Smith and other LDS 'prophets'. The Bible warned believers to stay away from such false teachings and to study the scriptures to know which teachings are true and which are false. While it is important that Christians know what they believe and can support those beliefs with scripture, Mormon friends, relatives, and neighbors should be approached with love and never in an inflammatory or argumentative manner. Much more can be accomplished through prayer and patient instruction than insults and personal attacks. Many Mormons may be unaware of the fact that the LDS doctrines are not consistent with the Word of God, just as many Christians lack a firm understanding of Christian doctrines and their Biblical foundation. This is why Paul wrote, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:15).

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