

# Pathway to the Highest Heaven

The Newest Evangelicals – Part III

Mormonism's Bid For Christian Status

Selected Scripture

## Introduction

The study on Mormonism has been a fascinating study to so many people. I have received more comments and questions about this series than any in recent memory. I think the most important reason for any body of believers to engage in a study like this is not as much to discover what others, who are outside of the orthodox faith, believe, but to re-discover what we believe.

The world has always been confused, as God said they would be. In fact, in Romans, chapter 1, we are told that men suppress the truth and then exchange the truth for the lie. And the lie is always somehow related to devaluing the Creator and deifying the created. The lie began in the Garden of Eden when Satan said to Eve, in effect, "Eat this fruit and you will become a god."

From that time until now, false religion makes God just another human, Christ just another exalted man, and, in the process, makes humans into gods. Confusion abounds.

We have been studying the way in which Mormonism attempts to pass itself off as another Christian denomination. Yet, for those who care to study their doctrine, as we have been doing, you discover instead, a far different God, a far different Christ, and as we will see today, a far different heaven and hell.

## Premises of Mormonism

Let us go back to the beginning premises of Mormonism.

### God the Father is one of millions of gods

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God the Father is simply an exalted man who still has a body of flesh and bones. He inhabits a planet near the star Kolob and produces, with His celestial wives, millions of spirit sons and daughters who are also gods in the making.

Are there millions of gods? Isaiah, chapter 44, verse 6, tells us,

*Thus says the Lord . . . I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.*

Isaiah, chapter 45, verse 5a, also reveals,

*I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. . . .*

So, the biblical God is either telling the truth, or He is not all-knowing (omniscient). He is just not aware that there are other gods around Him and no one wants to hurt His feelings by telling Him.

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Evidently Jesus did not know that either because He, over and over again, accepted the same worship ("proskuneo" in the Greek), as God the Father was

worshiped (also “proskuneo”). Scriptural examples of this include:

- wise men worshiped Him, in Matthew 2:11,
- a ruler bowed before Him in worship, in Matthew 9:18,
- a leper worshiped Him, in Matthew 8:2,
- a blind man worshiped Him, in John 9:38,
- Mary Magdalene worshiped Him, in Matthew 28:9,
- Thomas worshiped Him, in John 20:28, and
- the disciples worshiped Him, in Matthew 28:17.

All of these verses contain the Greek verb “proskuneo,” which is the same word that is used in reference to worshipping the Father. And, in every instance, Jesus accepted the worship. When Thomas said, “My Lord and my God,” Jesus should have stopped him and said, “Give that kind of worship to the Father.”

In fact, in Revelation, chapter 4, you have the heavenly host worshipping God the Father and falling down before His throne. Then, in chapter 5, you have the same scene played out before the Lamb of God, who is Jesus Christ.

Turn and look for yourselves at chapter 5, verses 13 and 14,

*And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” . . .*

(that is how we know Baptists will be in heaven, “Amen?!”),

*. . . And the elders fell down and worshiped.*

They are worshipping the Lamb, who is Jesus Christ.

### **All men and women are gods and goddesses**

- Another key Mormon doctrine is that all men and women are gods and goddesses, who are on their way to eternal godhood.

They will tell you that they began on this road by being saved, “Yes, I’ve accepted Jesus and He has saved me.”

Yet, you need to understand that when they use the word “saved,” they are thinking of two kinds of salvation.

### **Mormon salvation**

1. First, there is general salvation.

This is defined in Mormon doctrine as,

*that which comes by grace alone without obedience to the law and consists in the mere fact of being resurrected. In this sense salvation is synonymous with immortality . . . this kind of salvation eventually will come to all mankind, except the sons of perdition [Mormon apostates].<sup>i</sup>*

This salvation simply means that you will be immortal.

2. Secondly, there is individual salvation.

This is described in Mormon Doctrine as,

*that which man merits through his own acts through life and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.<sup>ii</sup>*

And, to obtain it, also according to their doctrine,

*This full salvation is obtained in and through the continuation of the family unit in eternity, and those who obtain it are gods.<sup>iii</sup>*

Now, this introduces the concept of the eternal family. A Mormon slogan says, “Families are forever”. If you want to make it to the highest heaven, the celestial heaven; if you want to obtain this individual salvation, then the faithful Mormon man must have a celestial marriage in the Mormon temple to a faithful Mormon woman and, as they progress, he will eventually become Elohim and she will be one of his celestial wives. They will then procreate their millions of spirit babies for all of eternity.

How does a Mormon reach that level? Well, at first glance, it sounds like they need to accept Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Yet, upon inspecting their writings more closely, you discover that the Mormon has to faithfully keep the laws and commands of the church in order to reach full, individual salvation. And, by the way, Jesus Christ only plays a little part in that salvation. Ultimately, Joseph Smith plays the most critical role.

That leads to the next premise of Mormonism.

### **Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ are equally necessary in mankind’s redemption**

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Joseph Smith's *Doctrines of Salvation* say,

*There is no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith. If Joseph Smith was a prophet, and if he told the truth when he said that he stood in the presence of angels sent from the Lord, and obtained the keys of authority, and the commandment to organize the Church of Jesus Christ once again upon the earth, then this knowledge is of the most vital importance to the entire world. No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the kingdom of God.<sup>iv</sup>*

Is it any wonder that a popular hymn in the Mormon church today, includes these lyrics,

*Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!*

*Honored and blest be his ever great name!*

*Great is his glory and endless his priesthood,*

*Earth must atone for the blood of that man.*

*Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven!*

*Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren;*

*Death cannot conquer the hero again.<sup>v</sup>*

Who is the hero? Joseph Smith! Whose name is great? Joseph Smith's. Who is the eternal priest? Joseph Smith.

The book of Hebrews makes it very clear that our great eternal High Priest is whom? Jesus Christ. Look at chapter 4, verse 14.

***Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.***

How does a person receive personal, individual, full salvation? We just read a quote by the Mormons, which teaches salvation is through the merits of a man's own acts and by obedience to their laws and ordinances.

What does the biblical record state? Look at Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8 and 9.

***For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift***

***of God; not as a result of works, so that no one should boast.***

## Temple Rituals of Mormonism

Now, as I have mentioned before, there is a Mormon temple being built nearby. It is one of the few that have been built in the world. The temple is critically important to the Mormon for several different rituals. These are pagan rituals, yet are being presented to Mormon initiates as one more step toward faithful Mormonism, which ultimately leads to personal godhood.

### Baptism for the dead

1. The first temple ritual is baptism for the dead.

This is based upon the Mormon doctrine that spirits can allegedly accept Mormonism in the spirit world, after death. This is another way of saying you can be saved after death.

There is a problem, however, as spirits do not have physical bodies. Now, since water baptism is necessary for "salvation," or the progression of the spirit toward godhood, and since baptism requires a physical body, then a living person is needed to act out the baptism on behalf of the dead spirit.

Joseph Fielding Smith explained, in *Doctrines of Salvation*,

*Water is an element of this world, and how could spirits be baptized in it? The only way it can be done is vicariously, someone who is living acting as a substitute for the dead.<sup>vi</sup>*

The belief, by the way, that living Mormons can vicariously save deceased individuals has been the motive behind the creation of the most comprehensive genealogical research and recording system in the world, and it is owned and operated within the Mormon Church. Recently, the Mormon Church created a web site for the public to log onto and search their family trees. The church released several million names so that the public could perform their own genealogical search. It was wonderful advertising, and whoever came up with it probably retired early. In fact, when the Mormon Church released the web site, that particular site received five hundred hits a second. Their IBM backup system was not sufficient and the system had to be shut down.

I logged on to confirm my suspicions. As I suspected, you were given an opportunity to request a visit from a Mormon missionary to come to your

home and, “share a message about how the teachings of Jesus Christ have helped individuals and families find greater happiness.”

### The Biblical Record

Well, just what does the Bible say about the issue of baptism for the dead?

The verse that Mormons have used to justify their false teaching of salvation after death, and the entire industry of baptism for the dead, is found in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 29,

*Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?*

In this chapter, Paul is explaining the order of the resurrection. He is describing the literal resurrection of the body. In this verse, he is simply using, as an illustration, the fact that even pagan people believe in some form of an afterlife; otherwise, why would *they* baptize for the dead.

Mormons would say that Paul, in this verse, is endorsing the practice of baptism for the dead. Yet, a simple reading of the verse shows that Paul is referring to someone else. In fact, if you studied that entire paragraph, you would immediately notice the change from first person pronouns, like “we and I,” to “they”. He did not say, “Why then are we baptized for the dead?” but, “Why then are they baptized for the dead?”

The historical record reveals that pagan religions, during the time of Paul, practiced baptism for the dead. In fact, one religion, called Elusinianism, actually thrived during Paul’s day. The participants baptized for the dead in seawater, without which they believed, “no one could hope to experience bliss in the life hereafter.”

Paul may well have been thinking of them. In other words, Paul is saying, “Listen, even the pagans believe in some sort of afterlife, otherwise why would they try to make sure that the deceased are eternally secure?”

What does the Bible reveal about baptism for the dead? The short answer is, absolutely nothing! In fact,

- nowhere does the Bible command baptism for the dead;
- nowhere does the Bible give guidelines for a baptism for the dead;

- nowhere does the Bible teach that the living can perform saving acts for the dead;
- nowhere does the Bible indicate the deceased can be saved after death.

One very interesting point to make in dealing with Mormons, is the fact that the *Book of Mormon* makes no reference to baptism for the dead. If the *Book of Mormon* is, as they believe it is, the fullness of the everlasting gospel and, if baptism for the dead is so important as it is in the Mormon plan of salvation for the deceased, then why is it never mentioned?

Furthermore, if the baptism for the dead is, as Joseph Fielding Smith said, “The greatest commandment given us, on behalf of our dead,” then why is even the *Book of Mormon* silent? The answer is because baptism for the dead became a critical part of Mormonism after the *Book of Mormon* had been written. Just as the Catholic church binds its followers with the mass and other sacraments, such as the last rites that are necessary for the safest passage to eternity, so the Mormon church holds over the heads of its followers the eternal destiny of countless ancestors.

Just think, if you follow the Mormon Church, you can actually save the eternal destinies of men and women in your own family tree who never believed in Mormonism, by being baptized for them. However, if you leave the church, all of them will be without the opportunity to achieve their state of godhood.

The Bible makes it very clear that the dead are unable to change their destiny. Luke, chapter 16, is a passage where the rich man who had died, wished that he could have a drink of water to relieve his torment. He was refused. He then wished that his brothers could be warned of this terrible place. That wish was refused as well. For this man, everything was sealed for eternity; it was too late to change.

The Bible does say, in Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 27,

... it is appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgement

### Secret rituals in order to go behind the veil

2. A second temple ritual is one where the Mormon initiate successfully enacts the secret handshakes and names which allow them to go behind the veil to be with the Lord. Mormonism makes special rituals,

names, secret handshakes, and the like, necessary to gain entrance beyond the veil.

Yet, the Bible records for us that we have boldness to enter the very presence of God. Ephesians, chapter 3, verses 11b through 12, describe our boldness before God Himself, by virtue of our faith in Jesus Christ. No secret handshakes, special names, or incantations are required – our access is through Christ.

### Three heavens

Now, when a Mormon talks to you about heaven, you need to realize that they actually believe in three heavenly kingdoms. “But,” you might ask, “doesn’t the Bible talk about different heavens?”

Yes. In fact, the King James translation uses the word heaven over five hundred times. The Old Testament Hebrew word that is usually translated “heaven” is “shamayim”. It is a plural noun form that literally means, “the heights”. The New Testament Greek word that is translated “heaven” is “ouranos”. Both the Hebrew and the Greek words are used to refer to three different places.

### The Biblical Record

- The first “heaven,” in the Bible, is the atmospheric heaven. This is literally, the sky, the region of breathable atmosphere that blankets the earth.

In Genesis, chapter 7, verses 11b through 12, in the King James Version, we read,

*. . . the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.*

In Psalm, chapter 147, verses 7b through 8a, also in the King James Version, we read,

*. . . God: Who covereth the heaven with clouds . . .*

- The same Hebrew word is used to refer to the planetary, outer space beyond the atmosphere. This is where the stars, the moon, and the planets are and Scripture uses the very same word for heaven to describe this region.

Genesis, chapter 1, verses 14 through 17, say,

*And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night; . . . and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens . . . He*

*made the stars also. And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens . . .*

Again, the same Hebrew word is used for the atmosphere as is used in these verses for the solar system.

- The third location, if you will, that the word “heaven” refers to, is a heaven that is beyond all of creation.

That is the heaven Paul spoke of in II Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 2 through 4, when he said he was caught up to the third heaven.

This is the heaven where God is said to dwell, along with the angels and believers who have already died. There is a literal place, created for the believer, called heaven. It is not the atmosphere and it is beyond the solar system.

Look at Matthew, chapter 12, verse 50a,

*. . . whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven . . .*

Colossians, chapter 1, verse 5a,

*because of the hope laid up for you in heaven . . .*

So, we believe, in a way, in three heavens. They are: the atmosphere, the solar system, and the abode of God.

### The Mormon Doctrine

The Mormon would say, “That’s great, we believe in three heavens also.”

However, if you ask them to describe them, you will discover that they believe in three different heavenly kingdoms. They are: the celestial, the terrestrial, and the telestial.

- The celestial heaven, or kingdom, is the highest kingdom of glory. It is inhabited by faithful Mormons who were married in the temple, gave their tithes, and followed the law to the letter.

A Mormon leader explains,

*An inheritance in this glorious kingdom is gained by complete obedience to the celestial laws . . . by entering the gate of repentance and baptism, candidates find themselves on the straight and narrow path leading to the celestial kingdom.<sup>vii</sup>*

- The middle heaven, or kingdom, is the terrestrial kingdom.

This is explained as being for,

*Those who reject the gospel in this life but who accept it in the spirit world; lukewarm [Mormons] in their devotion to the church.*<sup>viii</sup>

- Then, last and lowest heaven is the telestial kingdom.

This is where,

*most of the adult people who have lived will go . . . these are they who have lived after the manner of the world . . .*<sup>ix</sup>

This is the heaven for Mormons and non-Mormons alike.

Now, the Bible once again has to be tortured to back up their claim. And, once again, they have a text to torture. It is found in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 40a.

***There are also heavenly (celestial) bodies and earthly (terrestrial) bodies . . .***

There you have it.

The first thing to note, in this verse, is that there is no mention of a telestial body, or the middle heaven. By the way, even the Mormon Church admits that the purpose of the middle, or the telestial, heaven has not yet been revealed.

The second thing to notice is that the word “celestial” simply refers to our heavenly resurrected bodies, while “terrestrial” refers to our earthly bodies. If we had time, all we would need to do is read further, as Paul contrasts the earthly body (the terrestrial body) with the resurrected, glorified (celestial) body.

There is no mention of kingdoms. There is no instruction on how to reach the first, second, or third kingdom in the Bible.

Perhaps you are asking, “What if Mormonism is true after all, and you did not make it into even the lowest heaven?”

Joseph Smith writes, in answer, that people who do not make it into the first heaven (the lower heaven) can pay for their sins in a temporary hell (outer darkness). He says,

*These, after they have been punished for their sins and have been turned over to the torments of Satan, shall eventually come forth to receive the telestial kingdom.*<sup>x</sup>

This fits perfectly with other religions, including Roman Catholicism’s belief in purgatory, where people are eventually able to atone for their sins and make it into heaven.

There is not one shred of biblical evidence for any sort of purgatory, or temporary Mormon hell, or temporary punishment where a person can pay for his sins after death and then get into heaven. But it is a wonderful thing to believe, right? Why? Because you ultimately, get everyone into heaven, at least one of those heavens.

As a religion, Mormonism is far more agreeable to the human nature than Christianity, which teaches that hell is forever and that, once you have died, there are no more chances to reach heaven; that is it.

If you are a Christian, what is your hope of heaven? Look at Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 7 through 8a.

***In Him [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us . . .***

If you are a Mormon, what is your hope of heaven?

*No man or woman will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith. Every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith as a passport to their entrance into the mansion above where God and Christ are. He [Joseph Smith] holds the keys to rule in the spirit world and He rules there triumphantly.*<sup>xi</sup>

I shudder to consider the implications of Mormonism, the deception, and the coming judgement. Look at verses in Revelation, chapter 20, that talk about the end of time. Verse 10 tells us,

***And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.***

Verses 12a and 15, say,

***And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life . . . And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.***

There is no second chance, no baptism, no purgatory, or temporary hell, where you can work your way out. It is over and there are no more chances. There is eternal punishment for those who deceived and were deceived into believing that God

was nothing more than a man and that man could | become a god.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 8/15/1999 by Stephen Davey.

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<sup>i</sup> Bruce McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City, UT, Bookcraft, 1966), p. 669.

<sup>ii</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation (Salt Lake City, UT, 1958), vol. 1, p. 134.

<sup>iii</sup> McConkie, p. 163.

<sup>iv</sup> Smith, pp. 189-190.

<sup>v</sup> LDS Hymnal, 147.

<sup>vi</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation (Salt Lake City, UT, 1958), vol. 2, p. 141.

<sup>vii</sup> McConkie, p. 116.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid., p. 778.

<sup>x</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions (Salt Lake City, UT, Deseret, 1958), vol. 2, p. 209.

<sup>xi</sup> Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, p. 289.