

## **The Mormon Plan of Salvation: Part II**

As we study the LDS view of God, we find more and more places where it departs from Christianity. The virgin birth of Christ is one such departure. Lest we be accused of sensationalism designed to defame Mormonism, allow me to restate what has been said repeatedly before: The doctrines we are discussing are in no way distorted. They are presented as carefully as possible to allow us to see exactly what the LDS Church teaches. This is why such lengthy quotes from primary LDS sources are included.

The teaching of the LDS Church regarding the birth of Christ is as clear as any we have seen. Their doctrine (Q1) explicitly states that God the Father descended to earth and had physical sexual relations with Mary. Jesus was the result of this very ordinary sexual union. This stands in stark contrast with the Biblical doctrine (Q2) that the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and that the birth of Jesus was in every way miraculous.

At this point I find myself contemplating the nature of God in the LDS view. While they claim that their god is all-powerful, we have repeatedly seen places where he is severely limited. In particular, the never-ending "god cycle" means that their god can never put an end to sin. This is a god who is impotent. Such a god can never save me from my sins. In the case of the virgin birth, we find a god who cannot work a miracle (Q3), but must come down and perform an ordinary sex act with a woman betrothed to another man. While the LDS Church points out that in the normal course of things this would be a death penalty offense, god can do it because he is above the law. In other words, it's OK for god to sin! I suppose that this should not be surprising, since we already studied the fact that the LDS god was a sinner at one time. We must also note that the LDS doctrine would make Mary cease to be a virgin if normal definitions are used. To get around this, the definition of sex changes so that sex with god does not terminate a woman's status as a virgin.

Allow us to contrast this with the Biblical view (Q4). God's law is "perfect" and "holy", resulting in blessings. Why would God wish to break His perfect law? The answer is, of course, that He does not, since the Law is a perfect transcript of God's character. God not only will not, He cannot sin, because sin is not part of His character.

In this doctrine, the LDS Church has moved away from the "most correct book ever written", the BOM. There (Q5) we find the prophet Alma foretelling that Jesus will be born of a virgin as a result of the "overshadowing of the Holy Ghost". While we may discount the fact that this passage is pure plagiarism from Luke and that Joseph Smith got Jesus' birthplace wrong (Jerusalem instead of Bethlehem), it cannot be denied that LDS doctrine flatly contradicts their holiest book and the Bible. Once again we must question whether Article of Faith #8 has any meaning. When both of the books referenced in AoF #8 are rejected, one can only conclude that Mormons are left totally rudderless on a stormy sea. If new revelations can change eternal "truths", then the believer can have no security. No hope of salvation can survive without a firm foundation (Luke 6:47-49).

The LDS doctrine of salvation excludes only Satan, his angels, and the "sons of perdition" (Q6). This last group is stated to be a very small group who are irretrievably evil. The majority of men will be saved. This is called unconditional salvation, where all will live eternally in a glorious kingdom. One three level scheme is the division of glory into celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms, which initially differ only in levels of glory. Another three level division is that of unconditional, individual, and exaltation salvation. Again, all are saved to eternal life, but good Mormons are placed in the celestial kingdom on the basis of their works. Exaltation occurs as a result of baptism, priesthood, celestial marriage, and eternal procreation. This eventually leads to true godhood and the possession of a new world and its recurring salvation cycle. Once again, the LDS Church has ignored its most sacred book (Q7) which clearly declares that those who do not accept the cross will be burned up. New revelations have again changed the doctrine. Shifting sand will always continue to shift. Our hope must always be built on the solid rock.

The Bible agrees with the BOM on this issue (Q8). There is only one level of salvation. We will either be in the kingdom of God, or we will be destroyed. Our names will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life on the basis of our acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, not on the basis of any works. All those who do not accept the cross will be destroyed so completely that their memory will be erased (Psalm 34:16; 109:15).

We have discussed the idea of salvation by works versus salvation by faith so many times it

seems to be a broken record (Q9). But there appears to be no feature of the anthropomorphic pagan gods we have encountered which is so prominent. Both the RCC and LDS Churches have made god in man's image, and have a god which lacks the power to save us without our own help. The one true God is the one who sent His son to die on the cross. This act alone pays the penalty for sin for all who are willing to accept it. It is solely the act of faith which gains the victory for us. No amount of human works can add to it. It is truly the mystery of salvation that cannot be fully understood on earth. And it is the attempt to bring God down to our level that leads to phony doctrines of gods who cannot save us. This is the "strong delusion" (KJV) which leads to destruction (2 Thess 2:11-12).

The LDS Church requires baptism, temple blessings, and celestial marriage in order to enter the celestial kingdom on the way to glorification (Q10). Men also require the priesthood (Women are excluded). While Jesus was physically baptized, the NT makes it abundantly clear that the physical act of baptism is not saving. We are to be baptized by the Holy Spirit (Q11). This is also described as by Paul as circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29). The physical rite serves as an outward testimony, but it is the heart which is important (1 Sam 16:7).

It is not enough to declare that the living must be baptized. The LDS Church also declares that the dead can be brought into repentance. They make a show of using 1 Cor 15:12-29 to support the practice since Paul mentions it there. Careful examination of the passage shows that Paul is making no statement whatever regarding the practice itself. His actual argument is that his opponents are inconsistent, since they baptize for the dead, but do not believe in the resurrection of the dead. If they will not be resurrected, what is the point of baptizing for them? Once again, we find the LDS Church using texts out of context to support their position when they think that they can persuade the less well informed, and denying the truth of other texts when they contradict LDS positions. In other words, Article of Faith #8 is worthless. It has been superseded by progressive revelation.

Paul is said to have been married by the LDS Church. Again (Q13), we find that this is read into scripture in order to support LDS doctrine, contrary to the plain statements in scripture. Paul tells us that he is single. He wished that others could also be single, to be more devoted to the gospel work, but understands that this is not possible. There is not a single word written which would indicate that Jesus was married. It would have been wrong for Him to marry, since He knew that His destiny would have been to make any woman He would marry a widow and orphan any children He might sire. Jedediah Grant's assertion is contradicted (Q14) by the plain text of the Cana wedding account. Jesus was not the groom, He was an invited guest. The "Bride of Christ" is the Church.

The discussion of marriage naturally leads to the LDS doctrine of plural marriage. Not content to say that Jesus was married, they declare that He was married to several women, including Martha, Mary (the other one), and other women. The fact that this contradicts the Biblical ideal of monogamy (Q15) established in Eden, reiterated after the fall, and emphasized by Paul, is of no concern to the LDS Church. Again, scripture is trumped by progressive revelation. Joseph Smith was a ladies' man, and happily moved from bed to bed. He transformed the practice of "spiritual marriage", prominent in that day, into a "revelation" on plural marriage. This served to deflect the criticisms which would otherwise have come his way from early Mormons. On the other hand, it intensified the criticisms from outsiders, contributing to the expulsion of the Mormons from Illinois and Missouri. It is declared to be a permanent part of the celestial kingdom, only temporarily suspended (by revelation) due to current conditions. It is curious that while the Christian Church refused to compromise, leading to the deaths of millions of believers, the LDS Church modifies its positions to accommodate outside situations. This cannot be the repository of eternal truths.

The glorified man in the LDS scheme will have children forever (Q16). This is "eternal increase", and is the core of the concept of godhood. Unless god can have billions of children, he cannot populate a world. The Bible and the BOM are completely silent on the idea of procreation in the new earth. The only passage which even considers the concept of marriage in heaven states that men will be like angels, neither marrying nor giving in marriage. While the interpretation of this passage is beyond the scope of this discussion, we may safely say that it offers no support to "eternal increase", since angels do not have children.

Finally, the LDS Church insists that blood sacrifices will be restored. This flies directly in the face of the plain teaching of Hebrews that Jesus was the final sacrifice (Q17). In the old covenant system of sacrifices, the priest ate some of the sin offering, transferring the sin from the animal (where the sin had been transferred from the penitent) to himself. In this way, the priest "became sin" for the sinner. Paul uses this imagery to explain how Jesus became sin for us. Then, on the cross, Jesus died as our perfect sacrifice, "once for all time". Having paid the penalty, he can then return "without sin" for us.

God in man's image is a terrible thought. Such a god cannot put an end to the misery of sin. The restoration of blood sacrifices is an admission that the Mormon god is no source of hope, and without hope all is lost. I find myself without the words to convey the utter emptiness of such a situation. It makes a mockery of Jesus' words on the cross: "It is finished". To those of us who know the true God, these words are a completed victory. All that remains is to claim it. He will return to claim those who put their trust in Him. If the cross is not a completed work, then nothing matters. It will be of no importance whether you go gently into that long dark night, because all that will remain is oblivion.

We serve a risen Savior. His victory is complete. We were made in His image, then the reflection was dulled by the entry of sin. If we try to recreate Him in our image, we will be following our reflection, not His. Paul said that we now see as if "a reflection in a poor mirror" (1 Cor 13:12). We must be sure that the reflection we see is that of Christ, not ourselves.