

## **Three Levels of Heaven The LDS Plan of Salvation, Part III**

Earlier we have passed briefly over various aspects of the LDS plan of salvation. While we have seen many places where the LDS Church has redefined words, it is perhaps the word "salvation" which suffers the worst transformation of all. Let us briefly revisit a statement we have already encountered.

"The atonement of Jesus Christ is of a twofold nature. Because of it, all men are redeemed from mortal death and the grave, and will rise in the resurrection to immortality of the soul. Then again, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, man will receive remission of individual sins, through the blood of Christ, and will inherit exaltation in the kingdom of God, which is eternal life." (Joseph Fielding Smith, Prophet of the LDS Church, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 123)

1. Which members of the human race become immortal in the LDS plan? What additional actions are required in order to be exalted?
  
2. Which members of the human race gain immortality according to the Bible? (John 3:16, Rom 1:16)
  
3. What does Paul say about salvation by works? (Gal 2:16, Rom 3:20)

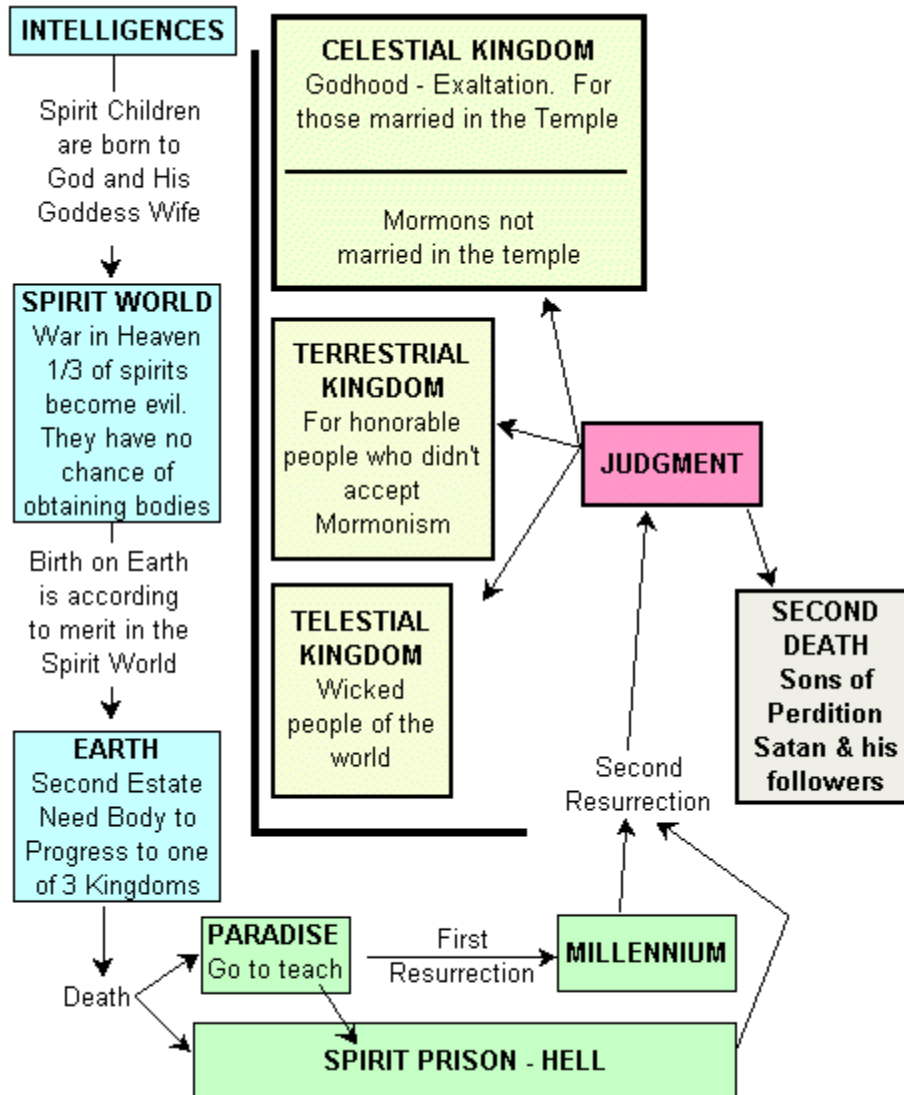
"Unconditional or general salvation, that which comes by grace alone without obedience to gospel law, consists in the mere fact of being resurrected. In this sense salvation is synonymous with immortality; . . . Conditional or individual salvation, that which comes by grace coupled with gospel obedience, consists of receiving an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God . . .

"Salvation in its true and full meaning is synonymous with exaltation or eternal life and consists in gaining an inheritance in the highest of the three heavens within the celestial kingdom. With few exceptions, this is the salvation of which the scriptures speak. . . This full salvation is obtained in and through the continuation of the family unit in eternity, and those who obtain it are gods. (D&C 131:1-4; 132) . . .

"Immortality is a free gift and comes without works or righteousness of any sort; all men will come forth in the resurrection because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ (1 Cor 15:22)

"In and of itself the resurrection is a form of salvation meaning that men are thereby saved from death, hell, the devil, and endless torment . . . In this sense, the mere fact of resurrection is called salvation by grace alone. . . Salvation in the celestial kingdom of God, however, is not salvation by grace alone. Rather, it is salvation by grace coupled with obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel." (Bruce R. McConkie, *LDS Apostle, Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 669-671)

Rather than spending time quoting large bodies of doctrine, we will use a chart to demonstrate the LDS plan of salvation.



(Source: Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, <http://www.carm.org>, Matthew Slick M. Div.)

We have reviewed most of the first part of this chart. Our purpose is now to explore the LDS concept of eternal life following physical life on earth.

“Contrary to the views found in the uninspired teachings and creeds of modern Christendom, there are in eternity kingdoms of glory to which all resurrected persons (except the sons of perdition) will eventually go. These are named: celestial, terrestrial, and telestial – the glory of each being beyond mortal comprehension. (D&C 76, 1 Cor 15:39-42, Rev 21)

“However, only in the celestial kingdom is the kingdom of God where the faithful saints will gain their eternal inheritance. All who fall short of the glory of eternal life will in greater or lesser degree be damned (even though they dwell in a kingdom of glory), for their eternal progress will be limited, and they can never go on to an eternal fulness in the Father’s presence. (D&C 132:16-17)

“Rewards granted individuals in eternity will vary between and within kingdoms. Only those who are sealed in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage and who thereafter keep the terms and conditions of that covenant will attain the highest of the three heavens within the celestial kingdom. (D&C 131:1-4)” (LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 420)

4. What is the difference between the effects of the cross in Mormonism and in Christianity?

5. Does 1 Cor 15:39-42 indicate three levels of heaven? (read through v. 49)

“The sectarian dogma of justification by faith alone has exercised an influence for evil. The idea upon which this pernicious doctrine was founded was at first associated with that of an absolute predestination, by which man was foredoomed to destruction, or to an undeserved salvation.” (LDS Prophet James Talmadge, Articles of Faith, p. 432)

6. What does the Bible say about whether we deserve to be saved? (Rom 5:12; 6:23, Is 3:11, Jer 17:9, Gal 2:20, Rom 12:2)

7. What is the fate of those who try to be saved by works? (Rev 20:12-15)

“There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; and the smoking incense would atone for their sins. . .

“I know, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it strong doctrine, but it is to save them, not to destroy them . . .

“. . . I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins. . .

“It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, yet men can commit sins which it can never remit. . . There are sins that . . . must be atoned for by the blood of the man. . .” (LDS Prophet Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 4, pp.53-54)

8. Are there any sins which Jesus cannot forgive by His death on the cross? (1 John 1:9)

No amount of discussion can change the fact that the LDS scheme of salvation twists scripture beyond its breaking point, and where that is insufficient, simply ignores contradictory scripture. We will simply define a few Mormon terms that are illustrated in the diagram above.

- SALVATION: Simply being resurrected. Because of the cross everyone will be resurrected, with almost everyone living forever.
- SECOND DEATH: The total destruction of Satan and his angels (none of whom ever had a body), and the extremely few people who refuse to accept the truth in the spirit prison after death.
- SPIRIT PRISON: The home of those who died without accepting Mormonism in life.
- PARADISE: The temporary home of good Mormons who then teach spirits in prison prior to the resurrection.
- CELESTIAL KINGDOM: The permanent home of good Mormons who are progressing to become gods.
- TERRESTRIAL KINGDOM: The home of other good people who refused to accept Mormonism.
- TELESTIAL KINGDOM: The home of bad people who weren't bad enough to warrant the second death. Even this place has glories beyond our wildest dreams.

**Think it over:**

If the Christian God is true, then being a Christian is the only way to enter the kingdom. If the Mormon God is true, even the Christian receives rewards so great as to be beyond comprehension or imagination. Why would anyone want to become a Mormon and risk any possibility that Christianity is true?