

**MORMONISM: THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**NOTE:** Members of the LDS Church use the King James Version of the Bible. It would be good to look at these verses in the KJV as well as the version you normally use.

**DAY 1: JUST PRAY ABOUT IT?**

One of the first things a Mormon missionary will do is give a potential convert a copy of The Book of Mormon, ask them to read it and then pray to “ask God if it is true”. This comes from The Book of Mormon itself:

*“We invite all men everywhere to read The Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Introduction to The Book of Mormon)*

*“And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you ...And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” Moroni 10:2,4*

Mormons are convinced that if a person asks “in faith”, “with a sincere heart”, and with “real intent”, they will “gain a testimony” of the truthfulness of The Book of Mormon (and by extension, Joseph Smith and the LDS Church). They will often quote James 1:5 in support of this method of discerning truth.

**Read James 1:-2-5** What is the topic James introduces in verses 2-4?

*In this context*, what kind of “wisdom” might we be lacking and need to ask God for (vs. 5)?

What’s the difference between “wisdom” and “knowledge”?

Mormons say this verse says we should ask God whether or not something is *true*. Do you think this is a legitimate interpretation of this verse? Why or why not?

**Read Act 17:11.** The Bereans heard Paul’s gospel message and were very enthused about it. What did they do to decide whether or not Paul’s message was *true*? How could this example help us in analyzing Mormon claims to new revelation?

**Read Deut. 18:21-22.** Joseph Smith claimed to be the “Prophet of the Restoration”, yet made numerous prophecies that did not come to pass. For an example, see Doctrine & Covenants 84:2-5,31; no temple was ever built on the temple lot in Missouri. Based on Scripture, should Smith’s stories or “revelations” be trusted? Would there be any reason to “pray” about it?

*Prayer for today: Pray that this study will help you talk to Mormons you know or meet about the true Gospel.*

## **DAY 2: WHO IS GOD?**

Mormonism teaches that Heavenly Father has not always been God. He was once a mortal man at some point in the past, but gained knowledge and progressed until he reached his current, immortal, exalted state as “God”.

*“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . 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. . . .” Joseph Smith, The King Follett Discourse*

**Read Psalm 90:2, Nehemiah 9:5b-6.** How long has God been God, according to the Bible? How do these verse rule out the idea that God “progressed” to become God?

### **INTERESTING FACT**

It was during the last 5 years of Joseph Smith’s life, from 1839 to 1844 that many of his most unbiblical doctrines and practices were developed and taught. The Book of Mormon, published in 1830, teaches a more biblical view of God. For example, Moroni 8:18 it says, “*For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.*”

**Read Isaiah 40:13-14, 25-28.** Do these verses seem to mesh with the Mormon doctrine that God was once a man who had to gain knowledge and progress? What specifically would suggest otherwise?

*Prayer: Praise God that he is the everlasting God, who does not change, who was and is and is to come! Praise him as the maker, the creator, of all that is!*

**DAY 3: HUMAN BEINGS: WHERE'D WE COME FROM AND WHERE CAN WE GO?**

Mormonism teaches we were all born as “spirit children” to our heavenly parents. Because we are the same “species” as God, we can progress to be just like him in *all* of his attributes. The purpose in coming to earth is to gain physical bodies so we can continue progressing toward Godhood.

**Read Jeremiah 1:5.** Mormons believe this verse clearly teaches that all people had preexistence as spirit children. But what does it mean that the LORD “*knew*” Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb? Does it mean “know” as in I “know” my friend Jenny who lives on South Circle?

Amos 3:2 can help, because it uses *the same Hebrew word*: [God says to Israel], “You only have I *known* of all the families of the earth.” Is God saying he didn’t *know* any other families? Hebrew scholars tell us that this word for “*known*” can mean “*chosen*”, implying God’s sovereign choice, his ordination or “setting apart” of something or someone for a specific purpose. If we read Amos 3:2 as “You only have I *chosen* of all the families of the earth”, this makes perfect sense. (In fact many Bible translations use the word “chosen”, because that’s the clear meaning.)

Now go back to Jeremiah 1:5, and read it as “*chose thee*” instead of “*knew thee*”. Write down other words in the verse that might indicate this is talking about God, in his foreknowledge, *choosing* Jeremiah before he was even born, rather than a statement about Jeremiah’s preexistence as a spirit being.

**Read Genesis 2:7 .** The LDS Church teaches that God put a preexisting spirit child into a physical body when he created Adam. Is there anything in this verse, which describes Adam’s creation, that would indicate the spirit of Adam was already in existence? Is there anything that would negate that idea?

*“As man now is, God once was. As God now is, man may be.”  
1843, Lorenzo Snow, 5th President of the LDS Church*

**Read Isaiah 43:10 and Rev. 21:3.** What statement does the Lord make in Isaiah 43:10 that would indicate man does NOT become God? In Revelation 21:3, the glorious scene in heaven, what is the relationship between God and those who will live with him? Is there anything in this scene that indicates humans will be exalted to the level of God?

*Prayer: Pray for any Mormon friends, relatives or neighbors that you know. Ask God to help you be a light.*

## DAY 4: THE PLAN OF SALVATION: THE MORMON PLAN VS THE BIBLICAL PLAN

This chart (from the [irr.org](http://irr.org) website) is a good visual of the Mormon plan of salvation. The “First Estate” is our existence as “spirit children of our Heavenly parents”. Birth into a mortal body is our “Second Estate”.

Our Heavenly Father knew that on earth we would sin and lose our way. So he sent Jesus, our older brother, to pay for our sins and teach us how to return to Heavenly Father. He atoned for all human sins in the Garden of Gethsemane, and gave up his life on the cross. Because of this atonement, all human beings are saved from physical death — meaning they will be resurrected and given immortality.

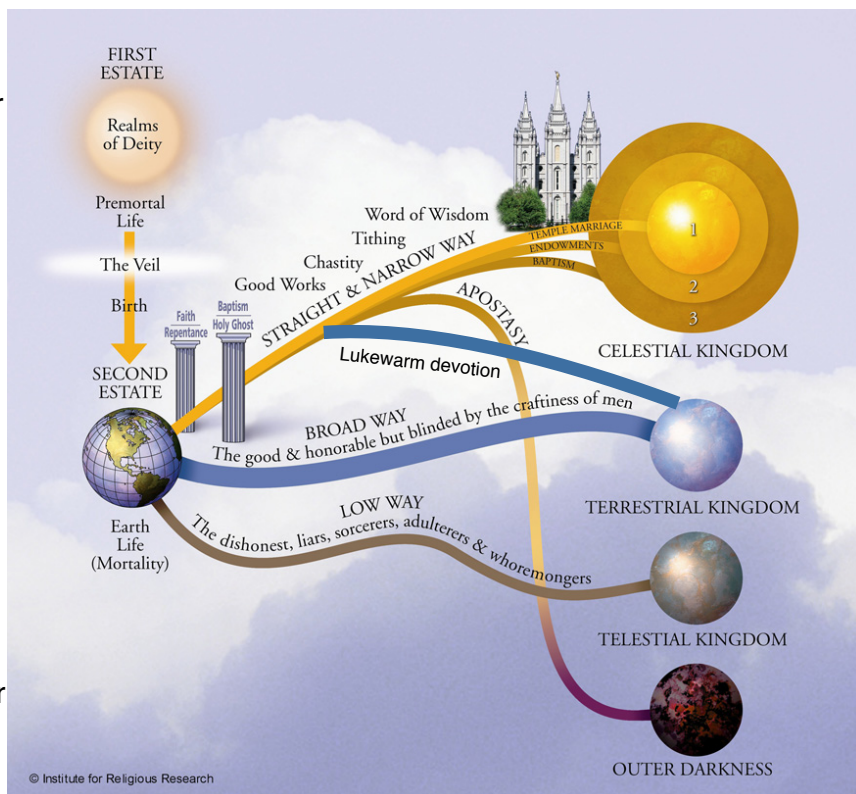
BUT—only those who *accept* the atonement can be saved from *spiritual* death, which is permanent separation from our Heavenly parents. A person accepts the atonement by

1) placing faith in Jesus Christ, 2) repenting of sins, 3) being baptized for the remission of sins by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and 4) obeying the commandments. However, this is just the first step, because there are *three levels* of the celestial kingdom. To reach the *highest level* (called “eternal life” or “exaltation”—meaning Godhood) there are extensive requirements:

*Be baptized and confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, receive the Holy Ghost, receive the temple endowment, be married for time and all eternity[in the temple], love God and worship Him, have faith in Jesus Christ, love our neighbor, live the law of chastity, repent of wrong doings, pay honest tithes and offerings, be honest in our dealings with others and with the Lord, speak the truth always, obey the Word of Wisdom [no coffee, tea, tobacco, alcohol], search out our kindred dead and perform the saving ordinances of the gospel for them, keep the sabbath day holy, attend church meetings as regularly as possible, renew our baptismal covenants as we partake of the sacrament, love and strengthen our family members in the ways of the Lord, have family and individual prayers every day, honor our parents, teach the gospel to others by word and example, study the scriptures, and listen to and obey the words of the prophets of the Lord. In other words, each person must endure in faithfulness, keeping ALL the Lord’s commandments until the end of his life on earth (from **Gospel Principles, published by the LDS church**).*

The Book of Mormon says, “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do.*” (2 Nephi 25:23). This means that grace is conditional. As LDS Church leaders have explained it:

“What do Latter-day Saints believe about grace? We believe that God’s grace is what ultimately saves us; yet it does not save us *without our doing all that we can* to live God’s commandments and follow Jesus Christ’s teachings. We do not believe salvation comes by simply confessing



belief in Christ as our Savior. Faith, works, ordinances, and grace are all necessary” (Ensign Magazine, published by the LDS Church, March 2013, p. 21, emphasis added).

Write down your response to this Mormon plan of salvation. How do you think you would feel if you were a Mormon who was having a hard time keeping up and doing it all?

What might be your attitude toward others if you were a Mormon and you thought you *were* keeping up and doing it all?

Both a husband and a wife must reach the highest level in order for their marriage to actually be eternal and lead to the procreation of spirit children. How might this belief effect a Mormon marriage?

### **THE BIBLICAL PLAN OF SALVATION**

The Bible teaches God is holy and perfect and he created mankind good. Adam and Eve, and then all people have sinned and therefore fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). The problem is that we are powerless to do anything about that situation (Romans 5:6), and if God didn’t do something about our sin and rescue us we would be forever separated from him (2 Corinthians 6:19). But God is love. He so loved the world that he sent a savior (John 3:16). And not just any savior, because what mere man could save other men from their sins? “The Word”—who was “in the beginning”, was “with God”, and who “was God”, became flesh and lived among us (John 1:1, 14). God came down. The Son came down, sent by the Father, to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). On the cross he suffered and died for our sins (1 Peter 2:24). And on the third day he rose from the dead, conquering death for all of us (Romans 4:25, 1 Corinthians 15:20). His death provides the way for us to be reconciled to God. His life gives us hope for eternal life with him (John 10:28).

This is already a much different story than the Mormon story. But the greater difference is in the terms of the contract. What does God want, in order for us to receive forgiveness of sins and the *fullness* of all his blessings? Does he demand a long list to-do list, like the one in the Mormon plan of salvation? Does grace kick in only “after all we can do”?

**Read Romans 5:1-2, Romans 6:23, and Romans 8:1,11,15.** According to these passages, what blessings have we received and how do we receive them?

**Read Ephesians 1:13-14.** According to this passage, what do we do and what does God do? What is guaranteed for us?

**Read Ephesians 2:3-10.** Let's break this passage down:

vs. 4-5. What did God do and why did he do it?

v. 6 From God's perspective, where are we already "seated"?

v. 7 What will learn more about and praise God for "in the coming ages"?

v. 8 How have we been saved? What is a gift of God?

v. 9 What role do works play in our salvation? Why can't we boast?

v. 10 As new creations in Christ, what have we been created for?

Go back and read the list of requirements for "exaltation" according to Mormonism. What's the difference between the to-do list of Mormonism and the works discussed in Ephesians 2:10?

**Read Titus 3:4-7** This is such a great "Gospel-in-a-nutshell" passage! What role did our righteous works play in our salvation? What is the basis for our justification and right standing with God? What hope and assurance do we have because of God's grace?

*Prayer: If you have never received the great gift of grace that God offers you through Jesus Christ, maybe you would like to! Pray to God to acknowledge your sins, confess your need of forgiveness, and accept the gift of grace God offers you when you have simple faith. God is eager to bring you into his family and shower you with eternal blessings! If you already know the Lord, thank him again for his grace and mercy, shown to you through Jesus Christ.*

## **DAY 5: THE CHURCH: DID THE GATES OF HELL PREVAIL?**

One of the key claims made by the LDS Church is that the true Church of Jesus Christ vanished from the earth by the end of the 1st century A.D. This is called the “great apostasy”. The true Church wasn’t restored until Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ commissioned Joseph Smith to be the prophet of the restoration. Mormons claim this great apostasy was prophesied in the New Testament.

**Read Matthew 24:10-13.** Is Jesus prophesying a complete collapse of the church in this passage? Why or why not?

**Read I Timothy 4:1.** Does this passage indicate that all in the church will fall away?

**Read Ephesians 3:20-21, 3 John 1:3-4; 1 Peter 5:10, and Jude 24.** What attitude did Paul, John, Peter and Jude have about the potential for followers of Christ to be faithful?

**Read Matthew 16:18.** The expression “gates of hell” (or Hades) is a metaphor for death (see Psalm 107:18 or Isaiah 38:10). So what is Jesus saying in this verse? Is there any indication here that within a few decades his church would disappear from the earth for 1730 years? What would it say about Jesus if he was unable to keep his church on the earth for even 100 years?

Joseph Smith once said: *“I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John Peter nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I.”* Smith, *History of the Church* 6:408-409.

*Prayer: Thank the Lord Jesus Christ for being the head of his body, the church. Thank him for sustaining her and keeping her through centuries of storm and trials (both internal and external!). Tell him you are ready to faithfully follow him wherever he leads!*

## **DAY 6: TEMPLE WORK**

There are more than 160 Mormon temples around the world, with more being built every year. Mormons consider these temples to be “Houses of the Lord”, where sacred ordinances can be performed. These ordinances are considered to be essential for ultimate exaltation and eternal life.

There are basically three ordinances performed in the temple: 1)the endowment, 2)sealings, and 3) ordinances for the deceased. Only worthy members of the LDS Church are allowed in the temple. Members must meet with their local bishop and answer a series of questions to prove their worthiness to receive a “temple recommend” card.

### Biblical teaching about the Temple

**Read 2 Chronicles 7:11-12 and Hebrews 9:1-3,6-7.** According to these verses, what was the purpose for the biblical tabernacle and temple? Does this purpose seem to be anything like the ordinances performed in Mormon temples?

**Read Hebrews 10:12.** According to this verse, why is there no longer any need for the biblical temple and the work done there?

**Read I Corinthians 6:19 and Ephesians 2:21.** There is no New Testament passage (or Book of Mormon passage, for that matter) that discusses using or building physical temples for ordinances. Instead, in the Bible there is a new vision of the temple. What is that vision, according to these verses?

### Endowment Ordinance

According to the LDS Church, the “endowment” is a special, spiritual blessing given to worthy and faithful members. The recipients “are endowed with power and knowledge”. This power and knowledge is required for reaching exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Some of the knowledge consists in special hand signs and words that will be need to be given in order to enter the celestial kingdom.

**Read Ephesians 1:3,13-14 and 2 Peter 1:3** Through faith in Christ, what has the believer been given? Why would these truths seem to negate the need for any further special “endowments”.



### Eternal Marriage and Family Sealings

Mormonism teaches that if a couple are married in the temple, they are married for “time and eternity”, and claims that those who reject this covenant will not receive eternal life (a.k.a. the celestial kingdom).

**Read Romans 7:2 and Matthew 22:24-30.** Do Paul or Jesus seem to know anything about eternal marriage between a man and a woman? If Jesus believed a married couple could be sealed to each other for eternity, how would he have answered the Sadducees question? (Bonus: Read Rev. 19:7 for a biblical description of eternal marriage!)

The LDS Church also teaches that families (husband/wife/children) can be “together forever” by being “sealed” together in the temple, so long as everybody does *all that’s necessary* to reach the highest level of the celestial kingdom.

**Read Mark 3:31-35.** How does Jesus redefine the ultimate family?

**Read Rev. 21:6-7** What is the biblical vision of the eternal family?

### Ordinances for the Deceased

Mormonism teaches that living, worthy members can go to the temple to perform baptism, endowments, and sealings on behalf of those who did not have a chance to hear and respond to the Mormon gospel in their mortal life. These deceased people are being held in spirit prison, and can accept or reject ordinances performed on their behalf. Mormons do genealogical work to identify their ancestors in order to perform these ordinances for them.

**Read Hebrews 9:27.** Does this verse mesh with the idea of doing ordinances for the dead?

The “baptism for the dead” ordinance was introduced by Joseph Smith in 1840 during a time of dramatic doctrinal development. The Book of Mormon, written in 1830, seems to side with the biblical point of view:

*“Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation . . . For after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.” Alma 34:31*

*Prayer: Thank the Lord that he has given you everything you need for life and godliness, and every spiritual blessing in Christ!*

**BONUS STUDY:** Look up I Corinthians 15:29. This is the verse Mormons point to in order to justify their temple work. Read the passage in its context, vs. 21-30. What is Paul’s overall theme—what is he *teaching*? Is it his purpose to teach about what opportunities people have for salvation after they die?