

Evangelizing Latter-day Saints: Explaining the Christian Faith in Mormon Vocabulary & Context

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Abstract

As the growth of Mormonism accelerates faster abroad than at home, foreign missionaries, more than ever, need support and training in guarding the flock as well as evangelizing the Mormon culture.

Protecting new converts from proselyting Mormon missionaries is relatively easy work. Typically, it requires only the revelation and documentation of the unbiblical teachings of Mormonism which are generally not revealed before one is baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church).

Evangelizing those who've already joined the ranks of Mormonism is relatively difficult. But there are two areas of preparation which can pave the way to a more fruitful witness to Latter-day Saints. (1) This paper will call attention to some of the LDS misrepresentations of evangelical Christianity which serve as stumbling blocks to Mormons who might otherwise be open to hearing the biblical gospel. (2) Equally important is learning the Mormon language so as to trigger the correct images when we speak of the important doctrines of eternal life, heaven and hell.

Introduction

Mormonism is growing faster in developing countries than in North America where they meet with more resistance. Their membership now exceeds 11.3 million, more than half of which is in foreign countries, and it's been projected to reach 260 million by the year 2080.¹ They now have over 60 thousand missionaries. That's about 50% more than the missionary forces of 825 U.S. and Canadian Protestant agencies, combined — and it's estimated that that number could rise to 110 thousand missionaries in less than 20 years.²

(These LDS missionaries are not evangelists but proselytizers. Virtually all their converts come from Christian denominations.³ So the education of new and nominal Christians about Mormonism cannot be ignored. In the U.S. this has been very simple and virtually 100% effective. It's as easy as revealing and documenting a few of the essential Mormon teachings to non-Mormons and comparing them to the Bible.

To encourage more cooperation between foreign missionaries and U.S. based countercult ministries, I've included some reliable resources following the end notes.)

The focus of this paper, however, is not on protecting the flock but evangelizing those already caught up in Mormonism, which is no easy task. Here's a typical scenario:

After learning about the unique, unorthodox teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon or LDS Church) a Christian will typically question his Latter-day Saint friend only to discover that, to his surprise, they *seem* to agree on every point of doctrine. This, of course, confuses the Christian and thwarts any efforts to share the true gospel with the Latter-day Saint because it appears to be a case of preaching to the choir.

(By the way, a good book for demonstrating LDS theology to a Latter-day Saint who either doesn't know what his church teaches or is simply not willing to admit it, is *Gospel Principles*. It's inexpensive and available at any LDS Book Store or from Deseret Book Store in Salt Lake City, phone: 800-453-4532.)

The problem is that Mormonism uses Christian language but has redefined key words and expressions so that, even though they say something that sounds Christian it doesn't mean what we think it means. So, before we try to explain the Christian faith to Latter-day Saints, or for that matter, ask them to explain their faith to us, it's important that we learn their language.

And then, there are other barriers to communication that we can remove by correcting some of their misconceptions about the faith and practice of Evangelical Christians.

First, let's deal with a couple of items of Latter-day Saint etiquette:

The Nickname, Mormon

The names *Mormon* and *Mormon Church* are still used by many Latter-day Saints but they've become very uncomfortable with the use of those names by outsiders. In my experience, although some Latter-day Saints don't seem to mind being called *Mormon* themselves, they don't accept outsiders calling their church the *Mormon Church*. Just to be safe, it's always polite to call them *Latter-day Saints* or *LDS*, and their church, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* or the *LDS Church*.

(In recent years, they've made an attempt to get journalists to reduce their name, on second reference, to *The Church of Jesus Christ*⁴ but I'm not going to

suggest that we accommodate them on that.)

To differentiate between LDS and non-LDS in a mixed environment, it's very easy, and polite, to ask, "are you LDS?" You'll get a quick "yes" from Latter-day Saints and usually a blank stare from non-LDS. This is very helpful if you have a different message for the two groups (i.e., education about Mormonism for the non-LDS and a Christian witness to the LDS.)

The Name Christian

When speaking to Latter-day Saints, it almost invariably puts a damper on the conversation when we compare anything *Mormon* to anything *Christian*. If we say, for example, "Mormons believe this but Christians believe that", this statement implies, correctly, that Mormons, in general, are not Christian. And the Latter-day Saint almost always responds, "We *are* Christians!" This usually leads to a premature discussion about differences that gets in the way of the positive dialog we would rather be having. Because Latter-day Saints refer to us, these days, as *non-LDS Christians* it's easy to avoid this aggravation to both parties by saying "The LDS Church teaches this but, in comparison, non-LDS Christians believe that" or "...Evangelical Christians believe so-and-so."

Some countercult apologists believe this gives credence to the idea that Mormons are *LDS Christians*, just another denomination of Christianity. Well, technically, we can't rule out the possibility that there might be a Christian in the LDS Church. There are at least 3 different circumstances in which someone with a saving faith in Jesus Christ could be a member of the LDS Church:

1. They may have joined, recently, and haven't yet been exposed to the "meat" of the Mormon gospel. That is, those things which they don't reveal to nonmembers.
2. They might have realized and accepted the true gospel of Jesus Christ and are still trying to figure out how to announce the decision to LDS friends and family without offending them.
3. They may be born again and trying to share the gospel with LDS friends by remaining in the church.

I personally know people who are, or have been, in all three circumstances. But if you consider the words carefully, I am not at all saying that I consider Latter-day Saints, in general, as Christian. I'm not comparing *LDS Christians* to non-LDS Christians but *LDS* or *Latter-day Saints* to non-LDS Christians. This is simply a matter of referring to ourselves in the language of the Latter-day Saints, so they can understand who we

are talking about, without implying anything about their beliefs.

Another stumbling block over the name Christian occurs when a Latter-day Saint asks the question, "Do you consider Mormons Christian?" For the majority of the roughly twenty years that I have answered and heard others answer that question, the answer has been "No, Mormons are not Christians." But that answer presumes that we know what every Mormon believes — and we obviously don't. It is so much more thoughtful and productive to answer, "That depends on what each individual believes." Then, we can discuss what we believe is essential to the Christian faith and listen to the Latter-day Saint to learn what he believes. Occasionally, the one I'm talking with, especially if he is a convert, is immature in his faith and doesn't understand LDS theology and is taking his lead from the Bible. I have been surprised, on a rare occasion, to find that the Latter-day Saint really does accept the authentic Jesus Christ.

Bible Versions

Latter-day Saints are taught that, even though the King James Version of the Bible has been "tampered with" by "corrupt religionists,"⁵ it's still the best version available to them. Because of this, most countercult apologists insist that, when we speak to Latter-day Saints from the Bible, we must use the King James Version. I'm going to suggest just the opposite, that it's important to use a modern translation. Latter-day Saints are so use to hearing the LDS slant on a passage when they hear the King James Version quoted that I believe it's best to let them hear the word of God, afresh, in their own language for a change. I believe this allows them, in some cases, to hear the message more fully and clearly.

If the Latter-day Saint objects, this only creates an opportunity to demonstrate that, contrary to what the LDS church has taught, the Bible teaches the same essential doctrines no matter which of the Christian versions one uses.

I'm not saying it's always easy. One day, at the Mormon Pageant in Palmyra, NY, two LDS young men asked me, "What about all the various translations of the Bible? They can't all be right, can they?" I said, "I take it that you believe the different translations disagree with each other." "That's right," they said. So, I asked them to follow in the KJV while I read a passage, of their choosing, from the NIV. They picked John 16:1 and I read from the NIV, "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray." One of them said, "You see, they're not the same! The KJV says "...that you should not be offended." Well, not having read my dictionary for some time, I didn't have an

immediate answer for them. So, I said, "I know, on the surface, it sounds like they're different, and I'm not prepared to resolve this apparent difference right here, on the spot. But I'm sure the answer will be simple. Could I write to you when I get home?" They both gave me their addresses and, when I got home from that mission trip, I looked up the various definitions for the word "offended" and sent them a photocopy of the page from my dictionary, as well as from a Greek-English lexicon, which gives, as one definition for *offended*: "caused to sin" — the equivalent of "led astray" in the NIV.

Obviously, if we're going to dabble in comparing Bible translations we need to be aware that there *are* differences and be ready to acknowledge and dialog about them.

I want to reiterate and emphasize that this is important, because every time we show a Latter-day Saint the faithfulness of the various translations to the essential story and doctrines of the Bible we also show him — without having to say it — that the LDS Church has not been honest with him about the reliability of the Bible.

Next, I'd like to suggest that, when we are speaking to Latter-day Saints there are a couple of important terms which we should substitute for the words we would normally use in our presentation of the Christian faith:

Instead of Hell Use *Perdition & Outer Darkness*

Words like *hell*, *damnation*, *destruction*, *eternal punishment*, and *spiritual death* have all been redefined by the LDS Church to mean a temporary separation from God with due punishment, until the resurrection. After that, they say, all will eventually be released to at least the lower level of Mormon heaven, the telestial kingdom.⁶ The only exceptions will be the *sons of perdition* (those who apostatize from Mormonism) who will go to *outer darkness* forever.

So, in the place of *hell*, we want to speak to our Latter-day Saint friends about *perdition* and *outer darkness*. These are the only Mormon expressions which closely relate to the biblical idea of the loss of a soul in hell forever⁷.

Instead Of Heaven Use *Eternal Life*

In Mormonism, the word *heaven* can represent any of their three degrees of glory⁸ — the highest or celestial kingdom, the middle or terrestrial kingdom, and the lowest or telestial. The telestial kingdom will be the final resting place for the worst sinners, including those who did not accept Christ as Savior and Lord before they died.⁹

So, if you ask a Latter-day Saint, "When you die, do you know for certain you'll go to heaven?", he can say, with assurance, "Yes, definitely! He'll even agree that it's by faith alone, not by works." even if he was not a faithful Latter-day Saint.

Eternal Life, on the other hand, represents the ultimate reward in the highest level of the celestial kingdom, where Heavenly Father and Jesus dwell.¹⁰ This is the closest equivalent to the Christian *heaven*, although, in Mormonism it also includes becoming a God. No Latter-day Saint can be sure of reaching this goal because it requires his perfect obedience to all Mormon laws and ordinances for the rest of his earthly life.¹¹ I don't remember ever meeting a Latter-day Saint who thinks he's going to gain eternal life by the Mormon plan. Most of them seem resigned to settle for a lower level of the Celestial Kingdom (which has 3 levels itself). Our job is to show him, from the Bible that the only alternative to *eternal life* is *perdition* which we'll discuss later.

Explaining the Christian Faith

Now, let's look at a typical explanation of the Christian faith to Latter-day Saints. I'm going to be adding a lot of side-bars to the basic message which can make it hard to stay on track. I don't expect they'll all be used in one witnessing encounter but we need to be prepared to address them when it seems appropriate. (Referring to the diagram *Heavenly Father's Plan for You, According to the Bible*¹² will help you stay on track.)

God's Purpose

The first topic I want to cover is God's purpose for us and, since Latter-day Saints typically refer to God as *Heavenly Father*, more often than *our Heavenly Father* or simply *God*, its not a bad idea to speak of him that way when it seems appropriate.

I explain that Heavenly Father wants to know us and have a close relationship with us, from John 17:26, that he wants us to have a full and satisfying life, from John 10:10, and that he wants to receive our praise and worship, from 1 Peter 2:9. This get's us off to a positive start because these passages spell out some common ground with our Latter-day Saint friends and are quickly agreed to.

Then, I typically ask, "Why is it that people, in general, are not enjoying this close relationship with Heavenly Father?" — which leads to the next topic:

Man's Problem — sin, death and hell

Latter-day Saints generally accept Romans 3:23, admitting that they have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and don't deserve eternal life.

What we must do, at this point, is to help them see the biblical implication of “falling short of the glory of God”. They need to see what happens to those who don’t gain eternal life? In Romans 6:23 we read that “The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life...” To us, this demonstrates the only option to eternal life — *spiritual death*. But, as we have already seen, to the Latter-day Saint this simply means that his progress to Godhood is halted and the worse case scenario is that he ends up in a lower but still glorious kingdom¹³. So, we need to show them, from the Bible, the relationship of *spiritual death*, to *outer darkness*. Remember, *outer darkness* is the only Mormon expression that closely relates to the biblical idea of the loss of a soul in hell, forever.

A good passage of scripture to demonstrate this is Matthew 7:13-14, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Here, we want to emphasize that, in spite of the fact some teach that virtually all will have a degree of salvation and only a few will go to outer darkness, Jesus said that the many will go to *destruction* and only a few will find *life*.

Now, the Latter-day Saint who knows his church’s teaching on the subject will say, “Well, destruction, that means damnation — the halting of ones progress toward Godhood — not *outer darkness* forever.” So I say, “I understand that’s what the LDS Church teaches. I’m only trying to demonstrate what non-LDS Christians have always believed, based on how biblical resources define the word *destruction* in that passage?” Strong’s Concordance, which Latter-day Saints generally recognize as authoritative, defines this word, #684:, as “ruin or loss: damnation, destruction... perdition...” So we have *damnation* and *perdition* listed as synonyms for destruction. *Perdition* is the key word, here. Every Latter-day Saint knows that sons of *perdition* go to outer darkness, forever, so they need to know that *destruction*, in Matthew 7:13, and *perdition* mean the same thing. To reinforce this synonymity, when we look up the word *perdition*, which appears seven times in the KJV, we see that, in every case, it’s translated from the same Greek word as *destruction* in Matthew 7:13, (ap-o’-li-a, #684). To further define this word *destruction*, in context, *Thayer’s Greek/English Lexicon* defines it as “the destruction which consists in the loss of eternal life, eternal misery, perdition...” It might be helpful to point out that *Liddel and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon*, one of the references currently preferred at Mormonism’s Brigham Young University,¹⁴ give the same definition as Thayer’s.

And, finally, we might as well call their attention to

the theological definition of the word “damnation” in a common English dictionary. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as “condemnation to everlasting punishment.”

Unfortunately, the LDS have redefined everlasting punishment to mean punishment that goes on forever but with a revolving door that permits people to enter, pay a horrible price for their sins and then leave.¹⁵ They need to see that the most horrible thing about everlasting punishment is that it never ends — that they will have all of eternity to regret following a false prophet and his gods which are conceived in the image of man. In Mt 25:46, when Jesus says “Then they will go away to *eternal* punishment, but the righteous to *eternal* life” he uses the same word *eternal* for both. He’s contrasting one eternal fate to another eternal fate. So, it logically follows, that a person will endure the one for as long as he would have endured the other.

After all this, you can expect to see a sober look on the face of your LDS friend. He’s just seen that even a lexicon recommended at BYU contradicts what the LDS Church is teaching. Don’t get too excited. The vast majority of Latter-day Saints, still, will not accept the words of the Bible over the opinion of their “prophet.” We need to keep in mind, however, that Jesus told us, in advance, “only a few will find [eternal life].” This is no less true for Latter-day Saints than any other people group.

When they do show their lack of trust in the Bible, I like to use this as a teaching opportunity by asking the question, “If there were compelling evidence that the Bible is trustworthy, would you be willing to take a look?”

If the answer is no, I usually feel free to close that topic of discussion and try to get them to look at documentary evidence that their own Doctrine and Covenants has undergone some serious tampering.¹⁶

If they answer “Yes, I would be interested in positive evidence,” I give them an immediate demonstration of the reliability of Bible translation, since faulty translation is a primary LDS complaint against the Bible. I first ask them if they believe different Bible translations actually teach different ideas. The answer, as with the boys at the Mormon Pageant, is always yes. So I take out my French New Testament and ask them to give me a New Testament reference without telling me what it says. I stumble through a rough translation into English from my French New Testament while they check it against the KJV. In spite of my awkwardness in translating, the two translations agree and they’re surprised. At this point they usually back away from the conversation — but the point is made, again without criticizing the LDS church, that

the Bible is more reliable than they've allowed.

Now, back to Romans 6:23. We've already defined "The wages of sin is death." Let's go on to "...the gift of God is eternal life..." Here, the Bible has the exact terminology for Mormon ears — not *heaven*, but *eternal life* is a gift. As I explained earlier, a Latter-day Saint would agree with you if you said "*heaven* is a free gift" because virtually everyone attains some level of heaven, but if you say "*eternal life* is a free gift" you're likely to find some disagreement. Because they're steeped in the idea that *eternal life* is the ultimate reward for good works, Latter-day Saints often retort, "that's too easy."

Most of them are familiar with the typical gospel presentation they hear from Christians, that you can be saved — that is, gain eternal life — by saying a short prayer inviting Jesus into your heart, with no strings attached. Almost without exception, the LDS are convinced that this means that we believe we can just "say a little prayer to get saved and then continue to live like before." Unfortunately, so many folks who claim to be "Christians" have reinforced that belief by their actions that it's hard to blame the LDS for the misrepresentation. In any case, while we're trying to keep them focused on our explanation of Heavenly Father's Plan, their mind is busy formulating questions about our *easy believism*.

We can help our LDS friends get over this stumbling block and hear the rest of the gospel, if we correct this misunderstanding before we try to move on. I believe it's essential that we assure them that a changed life of good works is an integral part of the Christian faith.

You'll notice on my diagram a little reminder that man's righteous acts are called "filthy rags" in Isaiah 64:6. But after receiving the gift of eternal life, works are part of the evidence that we have truly repented and turned to Christ. I usually mention Acts 26:20 where Paul says "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and let their deeds prove their repentance." And then, I like to bring up every Latter-day Saint's favorite passage when they're questioning Christianity's "easy believism" — James 2:17 where he says "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." So, we can agree with the LDS that good works are an indispensable part of Heavenly Father's plan for us, and we're going to show — later on — where they fit in.

Hopefully, we've helped our Mormon friend to relax and quit worrying about the issue of good works so that we can get back on track.

Now, I point out that Heavenly Father loves us and wants to be merciful — "patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish," from 2 Peter 3:9 — but that he's

also just and must punish our sin, from Exodus 34:7. We can agree with the LDS, that the standard by which He judges our performance, before we repent, is perfection, as recorded in Mat 5:48 and James 2:10. However, as man's efforts always fall short of reaching Heavenly Father's standard of perfection, out of desperation, we must look to His remedy, not our own.

Heavenly Father's Remedy

In explaining God's remedy I often quote 1 Timothy 3:16, "The mystery of Godliness is great, he appeared in a body" because, if I have time, I want to ask the question, "Who is this God who appeared in a body?" A knowledgeable Latter-day Saint would answer, "Jesus Christ," meaning, "the premortal Jehovah of the Old Testament" That gives us an opportunity to open up the Bible to Isaiah 53:6 and get the names within the Godhead properly assigned. We read, "...and the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all." Most LDS seem to know that the word *LORD* in all caps in the KJV is *Yaweh*, or *Jehovah*, so we don't necessarily need a Hebrew lexicon, here. The question is, "On whom is Jehovah laying our iniquity?" The reluctant answer is, "Well, on Jesus." I continue something like this: "How can Jehovah lay on Jesus our iniquity, if Jesus is Jehovah? You see, non-LDS Christians, relying only on the Bible, keep the persons of the Godhead separate and distinct. This is God the Father, whose name is Jehovah, laying on the Son, whose name is Jesus, the iniquity of us all — two distinct personages, or personifications, if you will — yet they are both God — the same God."

Now, this brings up another communication barrier, and another opportunity to clear up a misconception the LDS have about the Christian faith. They are usually confused as to whether the Trinity is *three Gods in one person*, or *three Gods in one God*, or *three persons in one body*, etc. I'm not sure I have ever heard a Latter-day Saint get it right. And they're satisfied that it's a false doctrine. Here, again, they don't get much help from their Christian acquaintances who, as likely as not, can't explain it to them either. So, I suggest explaining the nature of God without using the word *trinity*. We can't expect those outside the church to understand our verbal shorthand. What we need to do is to focus more on explaining the nature of God by demonstrating His attributes, as revealed in the Bible, without using churchy language. Briefly, it could sound like this:

"Because God is *omnipresent* — that is everywhere present at the same time — and all powerful, He can, and does, act in more than one role — and in more than one place — at the same time. For example, at the baptism of Jesus, [this is the scene LDS and

Jehovah's Witness missionaries use to ridicule the doctrine of the trinity] God was speaking from heaven as the Father, descending like a dove, as the Holy Spirit, and standing on the earth in human form as the Son¹⁷ — all at the same time. And, in the Bible, each of these manifestations of God is personified and spoken of, as God — not *a god*. (This is a very abbreviated form of my explanation of the trinity to those who have been conditioned to reject trinitarian language. When we avoid using the word trinity and make sure they understand that God is omnipresent and omnipotent, Latter-day Saints *can* hear, and understand what we are saying about the nature of God, without the misconceptions getting in the way.) [If you would like a more complete, illustrated, explanation of the Trinity to non-trinitarians which has been well understood by Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christians alike, just send your request to one of the addresses in my contact information at the end of this article.]

By the way, in spite of the fact that Mormonism currently teaches that God the Father is not omnipresent¹⁸, many Mormons agree that he is. But if they disagree, I appeal to, Jeremiah 23:24, "do not I fill heaven and earth?", God says. If they don't want to trust the Bible, I ask if they would trust their own original Doctrine and Covenants which taught that God *is* omnipresent.¹⁹ This is a good opportunity for them to see how their "everlasting gospel" is not really everlasting but changing.

Now — back on track — I explain, from John 3:16, that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." It's crucial that we explain what's meant by the word *believe* in this passage. Here, again, we must correct the LDS misunderstanding that we believe the Bible teaches cheap grace. I want to give them the full, contextual meaning. Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines that word *believe* like this: "to have a faith directed unto... or in faith to give one's self up to, Jesus." So, those who trust in and give themselves up to Jesus will have everlasting life.

I reiterate that Jesus didn't die for us because we deserved it. Romans 5:8 tells us that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us." And I mention, from 2 Corinthians 5:21, that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that, in him, we might become the righteousness of God." Again, to offset the misunderstanding of easy believism, it's worth taking the time to explain that "in him" has to do with whether we are trusting Christ to the extent that we allow him to live in and work through us.

Now, how do we receive this gift of eternal life?

Our Response

We must accept the sacrifice of Christ as a gift. Ephesians 2:8-9 is worth studying for a few minutes with our Latter-day Saint friends. "...it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it's the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast." I believe it's necessary to define the key words in this passage so that they cannot miss the implications. I tell them, "*Grace* is God's unmerited favor — we don't deserve it, we can't earn it; being *saved* is having *eternal life* which is granted immediately by God to those who receive Christ — not only as Savior, but also as Lord or Leader of one's life; *faith* is trusting Christ as sufficient — not only what he did for us but what he wants to do through us; a *gift* is something you never pay for but always want to show gratitude for.

We must repent. I always ask, "What does repent mean?", because so many folks, including Latter-Day Saints, say "To be sorry for your sins and not repeat them." I agree, "That's partially right, but it's more all-encompassing than that. It literally means to change your mind. Change your mind about what? Change your mind about who can show you how to have the things listed under "God's Purpose," above (See diagram). Change your mind about who's going to be in charge of your life. When I was doing life my way, I wasn't a very wise Lord. So I repented and told God that I wanted Him to be in charge of every decision, in every area of my life. That's repentance, in the general sense of that occasion on which we give up our will and accept Heavenly Father's will." By fully explaining repentance we can make sure our LDS friend understands that there's no room for cheap grace in our gospel.

We must confess with our mouth "Jesus is Lord" — again, it's worth explaining, that means he's in charge of everything — and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead. (Rom 10:9) I ask them to consider what their life would be like if they really believe God raised Jesus from the dead. Would that make the words of Jesus more valuable than those of any man who ever lived? Would we ignore or doubt anything he said? (If it seems appropriate you can give an example from LDS doctrine. For instance, when Jesus said marriages would not continue in heaven, should we trust his word or should we believe someone else who later says that marriages can continue in heaven? Latter-day Saints are quick to answer that Jesus didn't say that marriages performed on earth will not continue in heaven. In Mark 12:25, he said they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. That's why we must be married for eternity

while were still on the earth. But, we must call their attention to the context of the answer. The woman in question had been married on earth to seven brothers. The question posed is, "At the resurrection, whose wife will she be," since the seven were married to her? In this context, Jesus' answer, clearly, is that none of them will be the husband of that woman at the resurrection. "They will be like the angels of heaven."

Baptism needs to be dealt with in the same manner as good works. We need to show Latter-day Saints that, although baptism is not a legalistic requirement — salvation is not by works, after all — it is an act of obedience in following Christ that can't be ignored any more than we could ignore his command to partake of communion. It's part of our initial testimony to the world that we have died to our old self and are resurrected to a new life in Christ. Sometimes, it's been helpful to cite that Cornelius and his household received the gift of the Holy Ghost before they were baptized. (It's best not to say *Holy Spirit*²⁰ in this case. The LDS seem to use the term *Holy Ghost*, exclusively, for this gift.)

I reason with them that one who has received the Holy Ghost certainly doesn't refuse to obey Christ but willingly follows him in baptism.

Finally, we want to be sure to explain what happens when someone genuinely trusts Christ.

Final Results

Now we have the pleasure of delivering the really good news that we are assured of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 and that we can know that we have — present tense — eternal life (not *heaven*) in 1 John 5:13.

It's very important for Latter-day Saints to hear that God's Spirit changes us — gives us the gift of the Holy Ghost in Acts 2:38 and promises us that we'll become a new creature in Christ in 2 Cor 5:17 — so that we are not going back to our old way of doing life. The genuine Christian is going to have a new heart that wants to follow Christ in a life of good works which God prepared in advance for us to do — compelled only by gratitude for what he has already done for us. We should help them see that doing good works to earn eternal life demonstrates a wrong and selfish motive.

In my experience, it really is news to most Mormons, that non-LDS Christians think this way. I quote all these passages, if possible, because they paint a clear picture of the radical change in the life of the true believer. I want them to know that I identify with what Paul said in Gal 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who

loved me and gave himself for me."

Now's the time to demonstrate, as we promised, where our good works fit into God's plan. I quote Eph 2:10 in context, repeating verses 8 and 9 to show the biblical chronology of these salvation related events. "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves — it is the gift of God, not by works — so that no one can boast. And verse 10 illustrates where works come into the plan — "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to do good works which God prepared, in advance, for us to do."

It's worth reiterating, here, that, in this chronological account, the works that Heavenly Father wants us to do come after we have received eternal life, not in order to earn it.

And, finally, here's the best news of all to the Latter-day Saint who is haunted by the perfection demanded in Mat 5:48 and has no hope of achieving it by his own effort — "...by one sacrifice [Christ] has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy." (Heb 10:14) Notice that he has already made us perfect — past tense — and yet we are still being sanctified, or made holy. Heavenly Father's not finished with us yet but, positionally, he considers us perfect, seeing only Christ in us. That's good news!

End notes:

- 1 The Centers for Apologetics Research http://www.thecenters.org/threat_article.html.
- 2 *ibid*
- 3 *ibid*
- 4 Salt Lake Tribune, Mar. 18, 2001, SLOC and the LDS Church down play the church's involvement in the Olympics, "Most recently, church leaders emphasized the faith's Christian beliefs by urging reporters and members to call the institution 'The Church of Jesus Christ' on second reference, rather than the traditional 'LDS Church' and 'Mormon church.'"
- 5 President Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, January 1992, p. 5, "The Keystone of Our Religion".
- 6 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p.420, "Kingdoms of Glory", p. 758, "Spiritual Death: 4 For Resurrected Personages"; *Doctrine & Covenants* 76.
- 7 *ibid*, p. 746 "Sons of Perdition", p. 566, "Perdition"; *Gospel Principles*, 1995, p. 298, "Outer Darkness".
- 8 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 2, "Heaven."
- 9 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 669, "1. Unconditional or general salvation."
- 10 *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 2, "Degrees of Glory: The Celestial Glory."
- 11 *Gospel Principles*, 1995, p. 304-305; Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, p. 206.
- 12 For a copy of the diagram Heavenly Father's Plan for You: According to the Bible, contact Tom Jones, 727-327-0862,

tomstpete@ij.net, 3500 12th Ave N, St Petersburg, FL 33713

- 13 Eldred G. Smith, BYU Speeches, March 10, 1964, p. 4. "The Lord has told us of three degrees of glory. There are three 'heavens,' as it is often referred to. We call them the telestial, terrestrial, and the celestial. I cannot for a minute conceive the telestial being hell, either, because it is considered a heaven, a glory. The Prophet Joseph Smith told us that if we could get one little glimpse into the telestial glory even, the glory is so great that we would be tempted to commit suicide to get there."
- 14 I inquired, at Brigham Young University's language department, as to which lexicons of Greek and Hebrew are used and was told that they use Strong's Concordance (also sold in LDS book stores). Then I e-mailed one of the professors of ancient languages, Kent Brown, who responded with the following: "...For myself, I appeal to a range of lexical aids. For Greek, I turn both to H. G. Liddel and R. Scott's 'Greek-English Lexicon' and W. Bauer's 'A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.' ...For Hebrew, the standard is still Brown, Driver and Briggs' Hebrew- English Dictionary for Biblical Hebrew..."
- 15 Doctrine and Covenants 19:6-12
- 16 For information and documentation on doctrinal changes in Mormon scripture, contact Christian Research & Counsel at one of the addresses following the end notes.
- 17 The LDS Church teaches that Jesus is the literal, biological son of the Father. (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p. 742, "Son of God.") I often explain to them that the relationship between the Father and the Son is not natural — it's supernatural. Jesus is God appearing in a body. And this appearance of God in a body is called the Son because the Jews couldn't possibly conceive of God actually being human. They were steeped in the idea that he is spirit. He's "called the son because of the flesh." This statement is made in the original Doctrine and Covenants, p.53, but was omitted, along with 70 pages called the "Lectures on Faith" in 1921.
- 18 The LDS Church teaches that God is not omnipresent, in person but his power and influence is everywhere by way of his spirit. (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p.61)
- 19 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 1835, p. 12 (*Joseph Smith Begins His Work*, vol. 2, contains the complete text of *A Book of Commandments*,* 1833, and the first edition of *Doctrine and Covenants*, 1835, in the form of photo copies from the original publications. Both volumes are authenticated by affidavits from the LDS publisher and the Deseret News Publishing Company in the introductory pages. The book is available from the Deseret Book Store in Salt Lake City, Tel. 800 453-4532.
- Volume 1 of *Joseph Smith Begins His Work* has photocopies of the complete original text of *The Book of Mormon*, 1830, which also reveals serious doctrinal changes but the vast majority of substantive changes is between *A Book of Commandments* and the 1835 D&C and between the 1835 D&C and the current D&C.
- * The forerunner of the Doctrine & Covenants, containing many of the original revelations to Joseph Smith before they were tampered with.)
- See also: James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, Ch.2, p.42 - p.43.
- 20 According to *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, the *Holy Spirit* is an alternate term for *Holy Ghost* (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol.2, "Holy Spirit") but some LDS leaders have taught that the Holy Spirit is — separate and distinct from the Holy Ghost, who is not omnipresent— the force or influence by which the Holy Ghost performs his duties. (Apostle John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p.76 - p.77)

Countercult Resources concerning Mormonism:

Utah Lighthouse Ministry - Sandra Tanner
<http://www.utlm.org>

Mormonism Research Ministry - Bill McKeever
<http://www.mrm.org/>

Alpha & Omega Ministry - James White
<http://www.aomin.org/>

Berean Christian Ministries- John Farkas
<http://www.frontiernet.net/~bcmmin/>

Mormons in Transition - Luke Wilson
(By His Own Hand Upon the Papyrus- book on-line)
<http://www.irr.org/mit>

Watchman Fellowship
<http://www.watchman.org/>

Christian Research & Counsel - Tom Jones
tomstpete@ij.net
727-327-0862

Resources for Evangelizing Latter-day Saints:

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons - by Mark Cares
<http://www.truthinlovetomormons.com>

Bridges - Helping Mormons Discover
God's Grace - Training Series
Salt Lake Seminary
www.slseminary.edu
888-809-1265

Christian Research & Counsel - Tom Jones
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About the author

Tom Jones is the Director of Christian Research & Counsel, a ministry dedicated to helping Christian families adversely affected by Mormonism, educating the Christian Church about Mormonism, and witnessing to Latter-day Saints who want to understand the true beliefs of the Christian faith.

His interaction with Mormonism began 20 years ago when his wife, who is still an active Latter-day Saint, rejoined the LDS Church after their marriage.

Tom has authored a variety of materials for educating and warning non-LDS about Mormonism and evangelizing Latter-day Saints. For a list of those resources, contact him at Christian Research & Counsel, 3500 12th Ave N, St Petersburg, FL 33713, 727-327-0862, tomstpete@ij.net.

