

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as the Mormon or LDS Church) introduces tens of thousands of people to its religion through its young, well-groomed missionaries and its highly publicized Open Houses hosted for its temples around the world. Perhaps the most attractive and most touted concept of the LDS faith is that through rituals only available in their temples married couples and their children can be together forever. A popular Church teaching manual states:

Families can be together forever. To enjoy this blessing we must be married in the temple. When people are married outside the temple, the marriage ends when one of the partners dies.... If we keep our covenants with the Lord, our families will be united eternally as husband, wife and children. Death cannot separate us”
(*Gospel Principles*, 2009 ed., p. 209).

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Latter-day Saints claim that one of the primary blessings and benefits of joining the LDS Church is the opportunity to be married in a temple and then have children ritually “sealed” to the parents in a special ceremony so that after death the family can be together forever. The CoJCLDS teaches, “The organizations and programs within the Church are designed to strengthen us individually and help us live as families forever” (*Gospel Principles*, p. 211). It also says that those who attain exaltation “will be united eternally with their righteous family members” (p. 277).



The LDS Church promotes *Forever Families* heavily – including at public events like a Cinco de Mayo celebration in California. The *LDS Church News* reported that its booth which “focused on strong families” gave away balloons printed with “Families are Forever” in English and Spanish. This resulted in “collecting more than 1,300 referrals” for the Church (*Church News*, May 20, 2006). It is easy to understand why people are drawn to this idea; it appeals emotionally and socially to our desire to have the

best and closest of our relationships continue after this life into eternity.

Progressing to become gods

Essential to the Mormon concept of parents and children living together forever is their teaching that couples who are married in the temple can progress to exaltation and become gods themselves. While this fundamental purpose of the temple ceremonies is downplayed or avoided at public open houses, it is central to the LDS belief system. For example, one of the eternal blessings listed in the LDS manual quoted above is: “*We can be exalted as God is and receive a fullness of joy*” (p. 221). The same

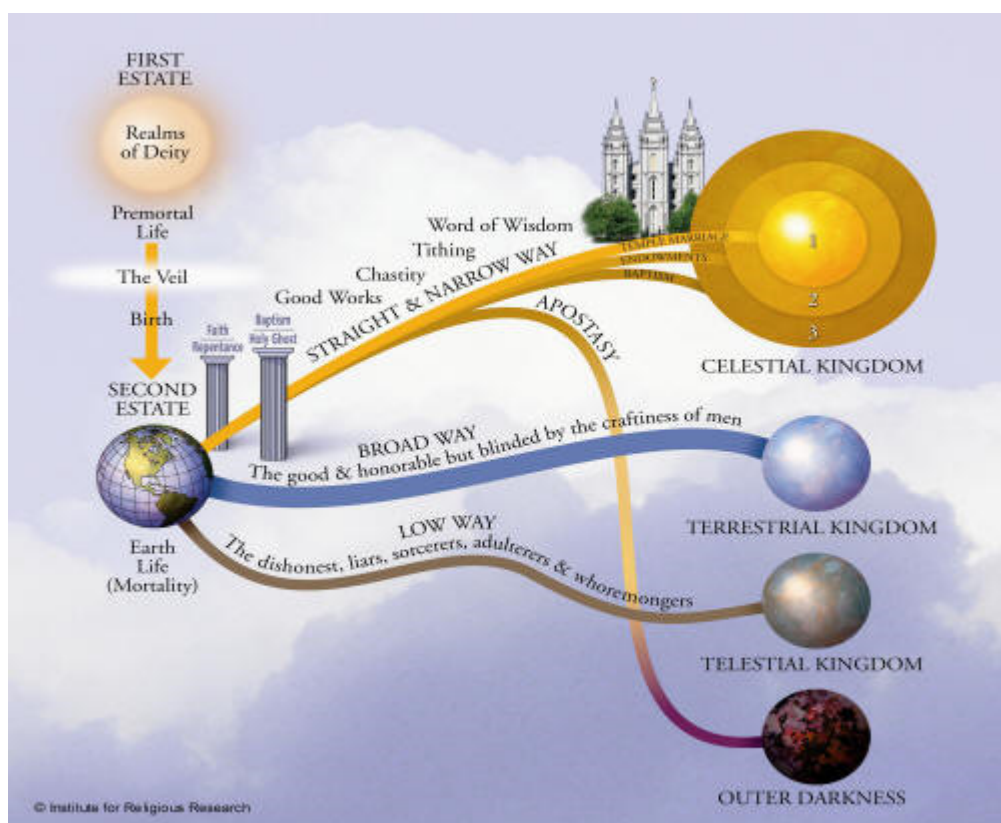
manual also states of those who achieve exaltation, “They will become gods” (p. 277).

According to the Latter-day Saint faith, people can become gods because God the Father himself was once a man like us and he also had to work his way up to becoming a god. This belief is summarized in an oft-quoted LDS saying that Lorenzo Snow, the fifth Prophet of the CoJCLDS, claimed to get as a revelation from God: “As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be” (*Ensign*, Feb. 1982, 39–40). Yet, because this doctrine directly contradicts both Christian belief and the Bible’s teaching that God has always been God (Psalm 90:2) and no other gods exist apart from Him (Isaiah 43:10), some Mormon leaders may deny this is a teaching of their church, even to the media and their own people.

LDS life after death

The afterlife in Mormon belief consists of three primary destinations for those who die, called “kingdoms”. A person’s eternal destiny depends on choices made here on earth and there is no progression after death for those who had a chance to accept the LDS religion in this life (*GP*, 271-273).

- The lowest of the three primary levels, called the *Telestial* Kingdom, is the place for those who are “liars, and sorcerers, and



adulterers, and whoremongers,” people who did not receive the Mormon gospel on earth or in the spirit world. They will suffer for their own sins in hell until after the Millennium and then be resurrected to this Telestial Kingdom and be visited by the Holy Ghost; but they will forever be separated from God the Father and Jesus.

- The second level is called the *Terrestrial* Kingdom, and it is for honorable people who rejected the Mormon religion on earth but then accepted it in the spirit world. Mormons would place most religious people who never became Mormons into this kingdom. Also here are Mormons who are not “valiant.” Those who spend eternity here will be visited by Jesus Christ, but never by the Heavenly Father.
- The highest level, called the *Celestial* Kingdom, is only available to members of the LDS Church. Only Mormon couples who make it to this kingdom and have their children “sealed” to them can be linked together for eternity. This kingdom also has three levels of its own, and those who make it

to this highest level can progress to become Gods and goddesses themselves. They will progress to be like God. Each of these new Gods will be put in charge of their own world, and on this world they will have spirit children, just as Mormons believe our Heavenly Father and heavenly mother had spirit children. Once a God and his eternal wife have enough spirit children, he will also create a planet like our earth, and there he will send his spirit children to get physical bodies and go through a time of moral and mortal probation. He will be the God to these people who will pray to him and worship him and repeat this process of eternal progression.

- A fourth level—the lowest and most horrible—is seldom discussed. It is called *Outer Darkness* and is the true hell of the LDS faith—the place where Satan and the demonic spirits will spend eternity in everlasting torment. The only people who end up here are those who know the truth and then reject it like Judas, which today would be people who join the LDS Church, have a “testimony” that the Mormon gospel is true, and then reject it, denying the Holy Spirit. *Gospel Principles* states of those who go to Outer Darkness, “They denied the truth and defied the power of the Lord. There is no forgiveness for them, for they denied the Holy Spirit after having received it. They will not have a kingdom of glory. They will live in eternal darkness, torment and misery with Satan and his angels forever” (p. 273).

Having a forever family

According to Latter-day Saint teaching, only those people who join the LDS Church, are faithful enough to be considered worthy to enter a Mormon temple, and perform all of the necessary temple rituals have any hope of having a “forever family.” A couple that is not married in the temple is not linked for eternity and cannot have their children sealed to them. But what of the faithful Mormon couples who devote their whole lives to this religion—what chance is there they will be rewarded with having their children with them forever?

There are three possible scenarios for a couple married in a Mormon temple. Let’s look at each of them.

Scenario 1: Worst case – A temple-worthy couple whose children leave the LDS faith

- The couple is married in the temple
- Their children are sealed to them or born in the covenant (into the LDS Church)
- Their children apostatize - leave the LDS faith
- The parents progress to godhood and create and populate their own world
- Their children are consigned to outer darkness or a lower kingdom
- **Parents and children are completely separated for eternity**

Scenario 2: Common case – A temple-worthy couple whose children remain LDS but are not temple-worthy

- The couple is married in the temple
- Their children are sealed to them or born in the covenant (into the LDS Church)
- Their children are not “valiant” or faithful and are not worthy of exaltation
- The parents progress to godhood and create and populate their own world

- Their children are consigned to the terrestrial kingdom or to a lower level of celestial kingdom
- **Children are separated from parents for eternity**

Scenario 3: Best Case – A temple-worthy couple whose children are also temple-worthy

- The couple is married in the temple
- Their children are sealed to them or born in the covenant (into the LDS Church)
- Their children are faithful, get married to LDS spouses, and are worthy of exaltation
- The parents progress to godhood and create and populate their own world
- Their son marries a faithful LDS girl in the temple and they progress to godhood and populate their own world
- The son and his parents are on different worlds for eternity
- Their daughter marries a faithful LDS man in the temple and they progress to godhood
- The daughter and parents are on different worlds for eternity
- **The family is separated for eternity** as each is busily involved being the God of their respective worlds. (Some Latter-day Saints may argue they will be able to “visit” each other, but occasional visits hardly constitute being “together forever.”)

The cruel reality is that there is no way within the Mormon system for a family to be together forever, not in the sense of being a family unit as it is so commonly portrayed. Because the LDS Church has made God in the image of man, the logical end result within the LDS system is that even in the best-case scenario LDS eternal families will suffer from the same sad realities as earthly families: children grow up, marry, move away, have their own children who grow up, marry and move away, literally worlds apart. In the other scenarios the separation is absolute and eternal as parents and children are relegated to different kingdoms whose borders are forever sealed.

The Christian alternative: One family together forever

The Bible and Christian teaching, however, offer a much more joyous prospect. All those who come to Christ in faith and repentance (regardless of their church membership or denominational affiliation) become adopted sons and daughters of God (Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:23; 9:4). God has promised to make one new heaven and new earth. Here we will all live together in righteousness as a single eternal family with God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Rather than focusing on exalting ourselves and developing our own deification, our common focus will be the awestruck, grateful, joyous worship and enjoyment of our God in whom we find all love, fulfillment, security and significance. Spouses and children (as well as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and dearest friends) who have trusted Jesus Christ *will* truly be together forever; the previous earthly relationships paling in comparison to the shared intimacy we will then have with our Creator, Savior, Redeemer, Lord, Bridegroom and God (see Revelation 21-22). Only in and through Jesus Christ (and outside the Mormon system) will we find forgiveness, salvation, true joy and contentment, and the promise of a future hope where we are one big happy family forever.

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Notes:

The following are quotes from LDS scriptures and apostles and prophets on the subject of men becoming gods and doing as God the Father has done beforehand (according to Mormon teaching): procreating spirit children on his own world, creating and governing additional worlds, sending those spirit children to populate that world, and being their God, like God the Father is our God now. /p>

The *Doctrine & Covenants* states:

19 And again, verily I say unto you, **if a man marry a wife by my word**, which is my law, and **by the new and everlasting covenant**, ...Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; ...and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, ...and they shall pass by the angels, and **the gods**, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a **fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever**.

20 Then shall **they be gods**, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. **Then shall they be gods**, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory**.

22 For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto **the exaltation and continuation of the lives**, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me. (*Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-22*)

Gospel Principles, editions prior to 2009 included these statements related to eternal marriage and exaltation:

We know that we can have our children with us throughout eternity (GP, 1997 ed., p. 243)

... will be able to have spirit children also. These spirit children will have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father" (GP, 1997 ed., p. 302).

It is possible these statements were deleted from the most recent edition because of heightened awareness that the first statement is simply untrue within the LDS system, and the second statement regarding people having spirit children who would one day pray to them and worship them was contrary to Christian beliefs and the Bible's teaching and uncomfortably exposed the non-Christian expectations of LDS Church teaching.

1999 LDS Priesthood manual, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, p.337:

Man is the child of God...the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.

Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol.2, p.48:

The Father has promised us that through our faithfulness we shall be blessed with the fulness of his kingdom. In other words we will have the privilege of becoming like him. To become like him we must have all the powers of godhood; thus a man and his wife when glorified will have spirit children who eventually will go on an earth like this one we are on and pass through the same kind of experiences, being subject to mortal conditions, and if faithful, then they also will receive the fulness of exaltation and partake of the same blessings. There is no end to this development; it will go on forever. We will become gods and have jurisdiction over worlds, and these worlds will be peopled by our own offspring. We will have an endless eternity for this.

B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, pp.276-284, quotes approvingly Orson Pratt's view of heaven:

"We would find, were we to carry this subject from world to world, from our world to another, even to the endless ages of eternity, that there never was a time but what there was a Father and Son. In other words when you entertain that which is endless, you exclude the idea of first being, a first world; the moment you admit of a first, you limit the idea of endless.

"Says one, "this is incomprehensible." It may be so in some respects. We can admit, though, that duration is endless, for it is impossible for man to conceive of a limit to it. If duration is endless there can never be a first minute, a first hour, or first period; endless duration in the past is made up of a continuation of endless successive moments—it had no beginning. Precisely so with regard to this endless succession of personages; there never will be a time when fathers, and sons, and worlds will not exist; neither was there ever a period through all the past ages of duration, but what there was a world, and a Father and Son, a redemption and exaltation to the fullness and power of the Godhead.

"How very plain it is when we once learn about our future heaven. We do not have to pray, according to the Methodists, for the Lord to take us

to a land beyond time and space, the Saints, secure abode. How inconsistent to look for a heaven beyond space! The heaven of the Saints is something we can look forward to in the confident hope of realizing our inheritances and enjoying them forever, when the earth becomes sanctified and made new. And there, as here, we will spread forth, **and multiply our children**. How long? For eternity. **What, resurrected Saints have children? Yes, the same as our God**, who is the Father of our spirits; so you, if you are faithful to the end, will become fathers to your sons and daughters, who will be as **innumerable** as the sands upon the sea shore; **they will be your children, and you will be their heavenly fathers, the same as our heavenly Father is Father to us**, and they will belong to your kingdoms through all the vast ages of eternity, the same as we will belong to our father's kingdom.'

Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.2: Topic, GODHOOD:

Logically and naturally, the ultimate desire of a loving Supreme Being is to help his children enjoy all that he enjoys. **For Latter-day Saints, the term "godhood" denotes the attainment of such a state—one of having all divine attributes and doing as God does and being as God is**. Such a state is to be enjoyed by all exalted, embodied, intelligent beings (see Deification; Eternal Progression; Exaltation; God; Perfection). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all resurrected and perfected mortals **become gods** (cf. Gen. 3:22; Matt. 5:48). They will dwell again with God the Father, and **live and act like him in endless worlds** of happiness, power, love, glory, and knowledge; above all, they will have the power of **procreating endless lives**. Latter-day Saints believe that **Jesus Christ attained godhood** (see Christology) and that he marked the path and led the way for others likewise to **become exalted divine beings** by following him (cf. John 14:3).

Journal of Discourses, Vol.2, pp.85-86, Orson Hyde, October 6, 1854:

When the servants of God and their wives go to heaven there is an eternal union, and **they will multiply and replenish the world to which they are going**.