

# Basic Doctrines

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The Basic Doctrines should be highlighted in both seminary and institute classes. Teachers are to help students identify, understand, believe, explain, and apply these doctrines of the gospel. Doing so will help students strengthen their testimonies and increase their appreciation for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. A study of these doctrines will also help students be better prepared to teach these important truths to others.

Most of the 100 scripture mastery passages selected by Seminaries and Institutes of Religion were chosen to support students' understanding of the Basic Doctrines. The majority of the scripture references listed in this document refer to scripture mastery passages. They have been included to show how they relate to the Basic Doctrines.



SEMINARIES AND  
INSTITUTES OF RELIGION

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THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

# 1. Godhead

There are three separate personages in the Godhead: God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost (see Joseph Smith—History 1:15–20). The Father and the Son have tangible bodies of flesh and bone, and the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit (see D&C 130:22–23). They are one in purpose and doctrine. They are perfectly united in bringing to pass Heavenly Father’s divine plan of salvation.

## God the Father

God the Father is the Supreme Ruler of the universe. He is the Father of our spirits (see Hebrews 12:9). He is perfect, has all power, and knows all things. He is also a God of perfect mercy, kindness, and charity.

## Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of the Father in the spirit and is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Messiah of the New Testament.

Jesus Christ lived a sinless life and made a perfect Atonement for the sins of all mankind (see Alma 7:11–13). His life is the perfect example of how all mankind should live (see John 14:6; 3 Nephi 12:48). He was the first person on this earth to be resurrected (see 1 Corinthians 15:20–22). He will come again in power and glory and will reign on the earth during the Millennium.

All prayers, blessings, and priesthood ordinances should be done in the name of Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 18:15, 20–21).

Related references: Helaman 5:12; D&C 19:23; D&C 76:22–24

## The Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. He is a personage of spirit without a body of flesh and bones. He is often referred to as the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Comforter.

The Holy Ghost bears witness of the Father and the Son, reveals the truth of all things, and sanctifies those who repent and are baptized (see Moroni 10:4–5).

Related references: Galatians 5:22–23; D&C 8:2–3

# 2. Plan of Salvation

In the premortal existence, Heavenly Father introduced a plan to enable us to become like Him and obtain

immortality and eternal life (see Moses 1:39). The scriptures refer to this plan as the plan of salvation, the great plan of happiness, the plan of redemption, and the plan of mercy.

The plan of salvation includes the Creation, the Fall, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and all of the laws, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel. Moral agency—the ability to choose and act for ourselves—is also essential in Heavenly Father’s plan (see 2 Nephi 2:27). Because of this plan, we can be perfected through the Atonement, receive a fulness of joy, and live forever in the presence of God (see 3 Nephi 12:48). Our family relationships can last throughout the eternities.

Related references: John 17:3; D&C 58:27

## Premortal Life

Before we were born on the earth, we lived in the presence of our Heavenly Father as His spirit children (see Abraham 3:22–23). In this premortal existence we participated in a council with Heavenly Father’s other spirit children. During that council, Heavenly Father presented His plan and the premortal Jesus Christ covenanted to be the Savior.

We used our agency to follow Heavenly Father’s plan. We prepared to come to earth, where we could continue to progress.

Those who followed Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ were permitted to come to the earth to experience mortality and progress toward eternal life. Lucifer, another spirit son of God, rebelled against the plan. He became Satan, and he and his followers were cast out of heaven and denied the privileges of receiving a physical body and experiencing mortality.

Related reference: Jeremiah 1:4–5

## The Creation

Jesus Christ created the heavens and the earth under the direction of the Father. The earth was not created from nothing; it was organized from existing matter. Jesus Christ has created worlds without number (see D&C 76:22–24).

The Creation of the earth was essential to God’s plan. It provided a place where we could gain a physical body, be tested and tried, and develop divine attributes.

We are to use the earth’s resources with wisdom, judgment, and thanksgiving (see D&C 78:19).

Adam was the first man created on the earth. God created Adam and Eve in His own image. All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26–27).

## The Fall

In the Garden of Eden, God commanded Adam and Eve not to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; the consequence of doing so would be spiritual and physical death. Spiritual death is separation from God. Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the mortal body. Because Adam and Eve transgressed God's command, they were cast out from His presence and became mortal. Adam and Eve's transgression and the resultant changes they experienced, including spiritual and physical death, are called the Fall.

As a result of the Fall, Adam and Eve and their posterity could experience joy and sorrow, know good and evil, and have children (see 2 Nephi 2:25). As descendants of Adam and Eve, we inherit a fallen condition during mortality. We are separated from the presence of the Lord and subject to physical death. We are also tested by the difficulties of life and the temptations of the adversary. (See Mosiah 3:19.)

The Fall is an integral part of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation. It has a twofold direction—downward yet forward. In addition to introducing physical and spiritual death, it gave us the opportunity to be born on the earth and to learn and progress.

## Mortal Life

Mortal life is a time of learning when we can prepare for eternal life and prove that we will use our agency to do all that the Lord has commanded. During this mortal life, we are to love and serve others (see Mosiah 2:17; Moroni 7:45, 47–48).

In mortality, our spirits are united with our physical bodies, giving us opportunities to grow and develop in ways that were not possible in the premortal life. Our bodies are an important part of the plan of salvation and should be respected as a gift from our Heavenly Father (see 1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Related references: Joshua 24:15; Matthew 22:36–39; 2 Nephi 28:7–9; Alma 41:10; D&C 58:27

## Life after Death

When we die, our spirits enter the spirit world and await the Resurrection. The spirits of the righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise. Many of the faithful will preach the gospel to those in spirit prison.

Spirit prison is a temporary place in the postmortal world for those who die without knowledge of the truth and for those who are disobedient in mortality. There, spirits are taught the gospel and have the opportunity to repent

and accept ordinances of salvation that are performed for them in temples (see 1 Peter 4:6). Those who accept the gospel will dwell in paradise until the Resurrection.

Resurrection is the reuniting of our spirit bodies with our perfected physical bodies of flesh and bones (see Luke 24:36–39). After resurrection, the spirit and body will never again be separated and we will be immortal. Every person born on earth will be resurrected because Jesus Christ overcame death (see 1 Corinthians 15:20–22). The righteous will be resurrected before the wicked and will come forth in the First Resurrection.

The Final Judgment will occur after the Resurrection. Jesus Christ will judge each person to determine the eternal glory that he or she will receive. This judgment will be based on each person's obedience to God's commands (see Revelation 20:12; Mosiah 4:30).

There are three kingdoms of glory (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–42). The highest of these is the celestial kingdom. Those who are valiant in the testimony of Jesus and obedient to the principles of the gospel will dwell in the celestial kingdom in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (see D&C 131:1–4).

The second of the three kingdoms of glory is the terrestrial kingdom. Those who dwell in this kingdom will be the honorable men and women of the earth who were not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.

The telestial kingdom is the lowest of the three kingdoms of glory. Those who inherit this kingdom will be those who chose wickedness rather than righteousness during their mortal lives. These individuals will receive their glory after being redeemed from spirit prison.

Related reference: John 17:3

## 3. Atonement of Jesus Christ

To atone is to suffer the penalty for sin, thereby removing the effects of sin from the repentant sinner and allowing him or her to be reconciled to God. Jesus Christ was the only one capable of making a perfect atonement for all mankind. His Atonement included His suffering for the sins of mankind in the Garden of Gethsemane, the shedding of His blood, His suffering and death on the cross, and His Resurrection from the tomb (see Luke 24:36–39; D&C 19:16–19). The Savior was able to carry out the Atonement because He kept Himself free from sin and had power over death. From His mortal mother, He inherited the ability to die. From His immortal Father, He inherited the power to take up His life again.

Through grace, made available by the Savior's atoning sacrifice, all people will be resurrected and receive immortality. The Atonement of Jesus Christ also makes it possible for us to receive eternal life (see Moroni 7:41). To receive this gift, we must live the gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes having faith in Him, repenting of our sins, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring faithfully to the end (see John 3:5).

As part of His Atonement, Jesus Christ not only suffered for our sins but also took upon Himself the pains, sicknesses, and infirmities of all people (see Alma 7:11–13). He understands our suffering because He has experienced it. His grace, or enabling power, strengthens us to bear burdens and accomplish tasks that we could not do on our own (see Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 4:13; Ether 12:27).

Related references: John 3:5; Acts 3:19–21

## Faith in Jesus Christ

Faith is a "hope for things which are not seen, which are true" (Alma 32:21; see also Ether 12:6). It is a gift from God.

Faith must be centered in Jesus Christ in order for it to lead a person to salvation. Having faith in Jesus Christ means relying completely on Him and trusting in His infinite Atonement, power, and love. It includes believing His teachings and believing that even though we do not understand all things, He does (see Proverbs 3:5–6; D&C 6:36).

More than passive belief, faith is expressed by the way we live (see James 2:17–18). Faith can increase as we pray, study the scriptures, and obey God's commandments.

Latter-day Saints also have faith in God the Father, the Holy Ghost, and priesthood power as well as other important aspects of the restored gospel. Faith helps us receive spiritual and physical healing and strength to press forward, face our hardships, and overcome temptation (see 2 Nephi 31:19–20). The Lord will work mighty miracles in our lives according to our faith.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, a person may obtain a remission of sins and eventually be able to dwell in God's presence.

Related reference: Matthew 11:28–30

## Repentance

Repentance is a change of mind and heart that gives us a fresh view about God, about ourselves, and about the world. It includes turning away from sin and turning to God for forgiveness. It is motivated by love for God and the sincere desire to obey His commandments.

Our sins make us unclean—unworthy to return to and

dwell in the presence of our Heavenly Father. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, our Father in Heaven has provided the only way for us to be forgiven of our sins (see Isaiah 1:18).

Repentance also includes feeling sorrow for committing sin, confessing to Heavenly Father and to others if necessary, forsaking sin, seeking to restore as far as possible all that has been damaged by one's sins, and living a life of obedience to God's commandments (see D&C 58:42–43).

Related references: Isaiah 53:3–5; John 14:6; 2 Nephi 25:23, 26; D&C 18:10–11; D&C 19:23; D&C 76:40–41

# 4. Dispensation, Apostasy, and Restoration

## Dispensation

A dispensation is a period of time when the Lord reveals His doctrines, ordinances, and priesthood. It is a period in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the holy priesthood and who has a divine commission to dispense the gospel and to administer the ordinances thereof. Today we are living in the last dispensation—the dispensation of the fulness of times, which began with the revelation of the gospel to Joseph Smith.

Previous dispensations are identified with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ. In addition, there have been other dispensations, including those among the Nephites and the Jaredites. The plan of salvation and the gospel of Jesus Christ have been revealed and taught in every dispensation.

## Apostasy

When people turn away from the principles of the gospel and do not have priesthood keys, they are in a state of apostasy.

Periods of general apostasy have occurred throughout the history of the world. One example is the Great Apostasy, which occurred after the Savior established His Church (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3). Following the deaths of the Savior's Apostles, the principles of the gospel were corrupted and unauthorized changes were made in Church organization and priesthood ordinances. Because of this widespread wickedness, the Lord withdrew the authority and keys of the priesthood from the earth.

During the Great Apostasy, people were without divine direction from living prophets. Many churches were established, but they did not have the authority to confer

the gift of the Holy Ghost or perform other priesthood ordinances. Parts of the holy scriptures were corrupted or lost, and the people no longer had an accurate understanding of God.

This apostasy lasted until Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son appeared to Joseph Smith and initiated the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel.

## Restoration

The Restoration is God’s reestablishment of the truths and ordinances of His gospel among His children on the earth (see Acts 3:19–21).

In preparation for the Restoration, the Lord raised up noble men during what is called the Reformation. They attempted to return religious doctrine, practices, and organization to the way the Savior had established them. They did not, however, have the priesthood or the fulness of the gospel.

The Restoration began in 1820 when God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith in response to his prayer (see Joseph Smith—History 1:15–20). Some of the key events of the Restoration were the translation of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods, and the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830.

The Aaronic Priesthood was restored to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist on May 15, 1829. The Melchizedek Priesthood and keys of the kingdom were also restored in 1829, when the Apostles Peter, James, and John conferred them upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

The fulness of the gospel has been restored, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30). The Church will eventually fill the whole earth and stand forever.

Related references: Isaiah 29:13–14; Ezekiel 37:15–17; Ephesians 4:11–14; James 1:5–6

## 5. Prophets and Revelation

A prophet is a person who has been called by God to speak for Him (see Amos 3:7). Prophets testify of Jesus Christ and teach His gospel. They make known God’s will and true character. They denounce sin and warn of its consequences. At times, they prophesy of future events (see D&C 1:37–38). Many teachings of prophets are found in the scriptures. As we study the words of prophets, we can learn truth and receive guidance (see 2 Nephi 32:3).

We sustain the President of the Church as a prophet,

seer, and revelator and the only person on the earth who receives revelation to guide the entire Church. We also sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators.

Revelation is communication from God to His children. When the Lord reveals His will to the Church, He speaks through His prophet. The scriptures—the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price—contain revelations given through ancient and latter-day prophets. The President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s prophet on the earth today.

Individuals can receive revelation to help them with their specific needs, responsibilities, and questions and to help strengthen their testimonies. Most revelations to leaders and members of the Church come through impressions and thoughts from the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost speaks to our minds and hearts in a still, small voice (see D&C 8:2–3). Revelation can also come through visions, dreams, and visitations by angels.

Related references: Psalm 119:105; Ephesians 4:11–14; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; James 1:5–6; Moroni 10:4–5

## 6. Priesthood and Priesthood Keys

The priesthood is the eternal power and authority of God. Through the priesthood, God created and governs the heavens and the earth. Through this power He redeems and exalts His children, bringing to pass “the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

God gives priesthood authority to worthy male members of the Church so they can act in His name for the salvation of His children. The keys of the priesthood are the rights of presidency, or the power given to man by God to govern and direct the kingdom of God on the earth (see Matthew 16:15–19). Through these keys, priesthood holders can be authorized to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation. All who serve in the Church are called under the direction of one who holds priesthood keys. Thus, they are entitled to the power needed to serve and fulfill the responsibilities of their callings.

Related reference: D&C 121:36, 41–42

### Aaronic Priesthood

The Aaronic Priesthood is often called the preparatory priesthood. The offices of the Aaronic Priesthood are deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop. In the Church today, worthy male members may receive the Aaronic Priesthood beginning at age 12.

The Aaronic Priesthood “holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism” (D&C 13:1).

## Melchizedek Priesthood

The Melchizedek Priesthood is the higher, or greater, priesthood and administers in spiritual things (see D&C 107:8). This greater priesthood was given to Adam and has been on the earth whenever the Lord has revealed His gospel.

It was first called “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God” (D&C 107:3). It later became known as the Melchizedek Priesthood, named after a great high priest who lived during the time of the prophet Abraham.

Within the Melchizedek Priesthood are the offices of elder, high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle. The President of the Melchizedek Priesthood is the President of the Church.

Related reference: Ephesians 4:11–14

# 7. Ordinances and Covenants

## Ordinances

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an ordinance is a sacred, formal act that has spiritual meaning. Each ordinance was designed by God to teach spiritual truths. The ordinances of salvation are performed by the authority of the priesthood and under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys. Some ordinances are essential to exaltation and are called saving ordinances.

The first saving ordinance of the gospel is baptism by immersion in water by one having authority. Baptism is necessary for an individual to become a member of the Church and to enter the celestial kingdom (see John 3:5).

The word *baptism* comes from a Greek word meaning to dip or immerse. Immersion is symbolic of the death of a person’s sinful life and his or her rebirth into a spiritual life, dedicated to the service of God and His children. It is also symbolic of death and resurrection.

After a person is baptized, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders lay their hands on the person’s head and confirm him or her a member of the Church. As part of this ordinance, called confirmation, the person is given the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is different from the influence of the Holy Ghost. Before baptism, a person can feel the influence of the Holy Ghost from time to time and through that influence can receive a testimony of

the truth (see Moroni 10:4–5). After receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, a person has the right to His constant companionship if he or she keeps the commandments.

Other saving ordinances include ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood (for men), the temple endowment, and the marriage sealing (see D&C 131:1–4). All saving ordinances of the priesthood are accompanied by covenants. In the temple, these saving ordinances can also be performed vicariously for the dead. Vicarious ordinances become effective only when the deceased persons accept them in the spirit world and honor the related covenants.

Other ordinances, such as administering to the sick and the naming and blessing of children, are also important to our spiritual development.

Related reference: Acts 2:36–38

## Covenants

A covenant is a sacred agreement between God and man. God gives the conditions for the covenant, and we agree to do what He asks us to do; God then promises us certain blessings for our obedience (see D&C 82:10).

All the saving ordinances of the priesthood are accompanied by covenants. We covenant with the Lord at baptism and renew those covenants by partaking of the sacrament. Brethren who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood enter into the oath and covenant of the priesthood. We make further covenants in the temple.

Related references: Exodus 19:5–6; Psalm 24:3–4; 2 Nephi 31:19–20; D&C 25:13

# 8. Marriage and Family

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, and the family is central to His plan of salvation and to our happiness. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between a man and a woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. Parents are to multiply and replenish the earth, rear their children in love and righteousness, and provide for the physical and spiritual needs of their children.

Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other. Fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and provide the necessities of life. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.

The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to continue beyond the grave. The earth was created and the gospel was revealed so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally. (Adapted from “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.)

Related references: Genesis 2:24; Psalm 127:3; Malachi 4:5–6; D&C 131:1–4

## 9. Commandments

Commandments are the laws and requirements that God gives to mankind. We manifest our love for Him by keeping His commandments (see John 14:15). Keeping the commandments will bring blessings from the Lord (see D&C 82:10).

The two most basic commandments are “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . And . . . love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:36–39).

The Ten Commandments are a vital part of the gospel and are eternal principles that are necessary for our exaltation (see Exodus 20:3–17). The Lord revealed them to Moses in ancient times, and He has restated them in latter-day revelations.

Other commandments include praying daily (see 2 Nephi 32:8–9), teaching the gospel to others (see Matthew 28:19–20), keeping the law of chastity (see D&C 46:33), paying a full tithe (see Malachi 3:8–10), fasting (see Isaiah 58:6–7), forgiving others (see D&C 64:9–11), having a spirit of gratitude (see D&C 78:19), and observing the Word of Wisdom (see D&C 89:18–21).

Related references: Genesis 39:9; Isaiah 58:13–14; 1 Nephi 3:7; Mosiah 4:30; Alma 37:35; Alma 39:9; D&C 18:15–16; D&C 88:124

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For more information on these topics, go to [LDS.org](http://LDS.org), Teachings, Gospel Topics; or see *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004).