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“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” 2 Timothy 2:15

Understanding Mormonism: Week 3

As we conclude this study it is my desire that you are encouraged and challenged; encouraged by the truth of the gospel and challenged to speak the truth in love with whomever God would connect you with. We read in Acts 17 of how Paul went to Athens and *“his spirit was provoked within him...”* when he saw how the city was given over to false religion. He then chose to engage with the Athenians and declare the clear simple truth of the gospel. May God *provoke* our heart in the same manner that we would be His messengers in our homes, schools, workplace and community.

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come they will not endure sound doctrine... but you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:2-3; 5

LDS teachings states that the church was totally apostate and God had to restore the church through Joseph Smith. Therefore only those who are a part of the fully restored church (LDS) can spend eternity in the very presence of God. All other churches, all non LDS, are apostate (having only pieces of truth and not the full gospel) and are in rebellion to God.

LDS beliefs are:

1. **Salvation:** Granted to all through the work of Jesus. Not based on individual belief, it is a ‘general’ gift to everyone. Jesus opened the door for the process of salvation to take place. LDS hold that everyone will be resurrected and then judged to determine which of the 3 levels of heaven they will go to.
2. **Eternal life** (exaltation): Highest level of heaven (Celestial Kingdom) which can only be attained by believing Joseph Smith and adhering to LDS teaching.

Bible teaches:

1. **Salvation:** All have sinned and the penalty (wages) of sin is death. (Romans 6:23). Whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)
2. **Eternal life:** Perpetual life; without end. When Jesus spoke of the gift of eternal life He spoke of being in God’s presence without end. (John 3;16, 36, 6:40, 20:31)
3. **Heaven:** The Bible shows there is everlasting life in His presence (heaven; Revelation 21:1-4) or there is life eternally separated from Him (hell; John 3:36).

Let's compare LDS teaching to what the Bible says concerning-

How can man be saved?

LDS-

To have "eternal life" you must

- a. By "obeying the laws and ordinances..." speaking of LDS requirements. (*Articles of Faith*, 3)
- b. By trusting in Jesus as they describe Him and obeying the teachings of the LDS church leadership. (The LDS church believe that they are the only church with the fullness of the gospel and therefore the only church with authority.)
 - i. Obey the plan you received in your "pre-mortal" existence.
 - ii. Obey the ordinances given by LDS leadership
 - iii. "Endure to the end" "Enduring to the end, or remaining faithful to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout life, is a fundamental requirement for salvation in the kingdom of God. This belief distinguishes Latter-Day Saints from many other Christian denominations, which teach that salvation is given to all who simply believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ. Latter-day Saints believe that to be saved a person must have faith in Jesus Christ, demonstrate repentance of sins, submit to baptism by immersion, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying-on of the hands by those holding the true priesthood authority, and then remain faithful to all covenants, continue in righteousness, and endure faithfully to the end of mortal life" Pg. 456,457 Vol. 2, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism; The history, scripture, doctrine, and procedure of the church of Jesus Christ of latter-day saints.* Brigham Young University

Bible-

- a. By believing/trusting that Jesus is God and Savior to all who shall call upon Him. No additional 'work' is needed for salvation. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*" Ephesians 2:8,9

Who can be saved?

LDS-

Only those in the LDS church:

- A. Those who follow Joseph Smith
 - i. "If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation" (Mormon Doctrine, pg 670)
 - ii. "No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith..." (Brigham Young J.o.D. vol.7, pg 289)
 - iii. "No salvation without accepting Joseph Smith. If Joseph Smith was verily a prophet, and if he told the truth...No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.1, pg 190)

B. Those who obey the teachings of the LDS church:

- i. “The President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints holds the keys of salvation for all men now living because he is the only one by whose authorization the sealing power of the priesthood can be used to seal men up to salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of God” (Mormon Doctrine pg.411)

Bible-

- a. “*For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*” Romans 10:13
- b. “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” John 3:16
- c. “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*” Acts 4:12
- d. “*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus*” 1 Tim.2:5

The definition dilemma- Realize that in conversation you may be using the same words but they have different meanings. Ask questions, speak clearly, and define what you mean. Familiarize yourself with their definitions as much as possible.

For additional “word puzzles” see *Terminology Differences* by Sandra Tanner

How do we reach our LDS friends, families and neighbors? Consider the following elements for effective witness:

Respect- Jesus faced opposition from many different areas; religious, social, political, even resistance among His disciples (John 6:60-71). Consistently He spoke the truth without mocking or deriding the individual and He respected them enough to address difficult issues.

Sincerity- Freedom from hypocrisy, disguise or false pretense. Effective witness requires a consistent, hypocrisy free witness. Share the gospel because you care for and love the people who are lost! Check your heart, if you are out to prove them wrong you will probably just argue.

Truth- Jesus said the “*truth shall make you free... therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*” Don’t be drawn off track, stick with the important issues such as we have reviewed; Who God is, Who Jesus is, How can I be saved, Who can be saved.

TERMINOLOGY DIFFERENCES

by Sandra Tanner

1. PRE-EXISTENCE:

LDS — Teach that everyone pre-existed; we all exist eternally

Bible — Only Christ pre-existed, not man (John 8:58; Colossians 1:17); we didn't have a spiritual existence prior to earth (1 Corinthians 15:46)

2. FALL:

LDS — Teach it brought mortality and physical death, not fallen nature; believe Adam was given two conflicting commandments and was supposed to fall

Bible — God tempts no one (James 1:13-14); man is basically sinful (Romans 8:5-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14)

3. SIN:

LDS — Specific acts, not man's basic nature

Bible — We are in spiritual rebellion until conversion (Romans 5:6; Ephesians 2:3); we do not just commit sins, we are basically sinful (Matthew 1:21)

4. REPENTANCE:

LDS — Repent of individual acts, not sinful nature

Bible — Must repent of basic rebellion (Jeremiah 17:9; Luke 5:32)

5. ATONEMENT — SALVATION BY GRACE:

LDS — Believe Christ's death brought release from grave and universal resurrection; Salvation by grace is universal resurrection, beyond this man must earn his place in heaven

Bible — Salvation is not universal but based on belief of each individual (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 9:28)

6. REDEEMED:

LDS — From mortal death only, not sinful rebellion or spiritual death

Bible — Christ redeems from more than mortal death, redeems us from spiritual death (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1)

7. GOSPEL:

LDS — Mormon church system and doctrines

Bible — Message of Christ's death and resurrection as atonement for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Galatians 1:8)

8. BORN AGAIN:

LDS — Baptism into LDS church

Bible — We are spiritually dead until our spiritual rebirth (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:23)

9. TRUE CHURCH:

LDS — Only Mormon church; true church taken from earth until Joseph Smith restored it

Bible — As a born-again Christian we are part of God's church (Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

10. AUTHORITY PRIESTHOOD:

LDS — Believe only LDS have authority to baptize, ordain, etc; have two-part system of priesthood—Melchizedek and Aaronic

Bible — Christ brought end to Aaronic priesthood and is the *only* High Priest after manner of Melchisedec (Hebrews chapters 5-9; 2 Timothy 2:2)

Note: In Mormon references *Melchizedek* will be spelled as in LDS literature. When used as a direct quotation from the Bible (KJV), it will be spelled *Melchisedec*.

11. BAPTISM:

LDS — Must be performed by LDS priesthood

Bible — Emphasis is on believer, not priesthood authority (Mark 16:15-16)

12. SONS OF GOD:

LDS — We are all literal spirit children of God

Bible — We become a child of God at conversion (John 1:12)

13. ETERNAL LIFE:

LDS — Exaltation in Celestial Kingdom; ability to bear children in heaven; must have a Temple marriage

Bible — Not limited to certain ones in heaven; no mention of parenthood or temple marriage but is given to *all* Christians (1 John 5:12-13)

14. IMMORTALITY:

LDS — Universal gift; ability to live forever but not eternal life

Bible — Makes no distinction between immortality and eternal life (2 Timothy 1:10)

15. HEAVEN:

LDS — Divided into three kingdoms—Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestial; place for almost everyone (misuse 1 Corinthians 15:40-41)

Bible — Only mentions two conditions, everlasting punishment or life eternal (Matthew 25:31-46)

16. KINGDOM OF GOD:

LDS — Means Celestial Kingdom, only those in Celestial Kingdom are in God's presence; those in Terrestrial or Telestial Kingdom aren't in presence of Father

Bible — All redeemed will be in God's presence (Revelation 21:1-3); all believers are part of kingdom (Matthew 13:41-43)