

The Plan of Salvation

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Did we come to this earth from some other place? Did we come here with a plan? If such a plan exists, is there any hope of finding it? If it's found, is there any hope of understanding it? If it is understood, is there any hope of following it to its end?

When one considers the plethora of scriptures and doctrines in Christianity, there is a Plan of Salvation that emerges—a *Plan of Happiness*. It is God's plan. We came to earth knowing this plan, but with our birth came a forgetting. This forgetting was an important step in the plan, and the process of remembering and then following the plan is the purpose of our lives. See the chart on the final page for a graphical depiction of the Plan of Salvation with its reference scriptures.

Premortal Life

The Lord said he knew the prophet Jeremiah before Jeremiah came forth out of the womb (Jer. 1:5). Paul wrote that our Heavenly Father is the father of our spirits (Heb. 12:9). As spirit children, we existed as intelligences with our Heavenly Father (D&C 93:21, 23, 29, and 38) and were organized in the premortal existence (Abr. 3:22-28). We were called and prepared before the foundation of the world (Alma 13:3 and Eph. 1:3-5), and our spirit will return to our Heavenly Father as the one who gave it (Ecc. 12:7).

War in Heaven

Lucifer, son of the morning, wanted to be the savior of the world and proposed to save mankind by usurping our free will (agency)—insisting he receive all of the glory for his efforts (Moses 4:1-3 and D&C 76:23-27). Jesus proposed another plan, in which all in the world kept their agency and could choose freely for themselves whom they would serve. Jesus also asserted that all glory should go to the Father, not to him. The Father chose the plan of Jesus. This enraged Lucifer and sparked the war in heaven. All of us were there, in the premortal existence, when Michael rose up to oppose Lucifer (the dragon) and defeated him along with the angels who followed him. (Rev. 12:3, 7-8).

Satan and One-Third of the Host of Heaven are Cast Out Without Bodies

In his staggering defeat, Lucifer took upon him the name of Satan (or the devil) and drew away one-third of the spirits in the pre-existence, and they were cast to the earth (Rev. 12:4, 9 and D&C 29:36-40). Having been cast out (Isa. 14:12), Lucifer, once a strong and valiant heavenly spirit, and those who followed him, lost their first estate and relinquished their opportunity to gain a body of flesh and bone on earth (2 Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6).

Two-Thirds of the Host of Heaven Obtain Bodies

Seeing that one-third of the spirits lost their first estate in being cast to the earth without a body, the other two-thirds kept their first estate and were given the opportunity to gain a body and come to the earth to experience mortality. Every human who has been or will be conceived in the flesh on the earth is one of the two-thirds who rejected Lucifer in the premortal existence and chose the side of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Mortality

Adam and Eve, the first man and woman on the earth, disobeyed God and were cast out of the Garden of Eden. The repercussions of their disobedience include the tribulations of mortal life and the physical death that follows (Gen 3:17-18). The fall also made it necessary to rely utterly on the mercy of Heavenly Father and the Atonement of Jesus Christ to avoid spiritual death. Our time on the earth will be spent learning and experiencing mortality in the flesh, while preparing ourselves to return to our Heavenly Father (Alma 34:32-33).

Satan's Spirits Remember Their Premortal Existence

While on the earth we will be subject to temptation from Satan and those who were cast to the earth without a body. These wretched, bodiless spirits desire us to be miserable with them and tempt us to choose that which is contrary to the commandments of our Heavenly Father. They have an advantage over us: They retain their knowledge of the premortal existence, much like the evil spirit who confronted Jesus as the "Son of God" before Jesus had announced this publicly (Mark 5:7).

Temporal Death

When our time on the earth has come to an end, we will die a physical death and our body will return to the earth (Gen. 3:19); however, our spirits will progress forward into the spirit world until the time of the Resurrections (plural) and Final Judgment.

Partial Judgment

The first step in our post-mortal journey is to be "partially judged." In the partial judgment, it will be decided where we will reside in the spirit world until the Resurrections. Those who have been faithful will be granted a state of rest, while those who have been unfaithful will enter into a form of punishment and refinement (2 Pet. 2:9).

Spirit World

The mainstream Christian notion of dying and going directly to heaven or hell is often misunderstood. The ultimate heaven or hell comes after the Final Judgment, which is not until after the Resurrections and second coming of Jesus Christ. Before that time those who pass away go into the spirit world, where they will wait until the Second Coming and the subsequent Resurrections.

The spirit world is physically located on the earth. However, our limited human capacity does not usually enable us experience this world or interact with those who occupy it, although some have occasionally done so.

The spirit world is segmented into three different realms: Paradise, Spirit Prison, and Temporary Hell. Each are separated by a gulf (Luke 16:20-26) that prevents those in one realm from interfering with those in another. Still, there are those in Paradise who are teaching those in the

Spirit Prison, much like missionaries teach people all over the world today.

Paradise

Paradise is the first realm of the spirit world and is immediately obtainable the moment one passes away on earth (Luke 23:43 and Alma 40:11-12). Paul was privileged to gain an understanding of paradise, but was not permitted to write about the experience (2 Cor. 12:4). Although there is work that will be done by those in Paradise, there will also be rest given to these individuals and their deeds on earth will follow them (Rev. 14:13).

Spirit Prison

The second realm of the spirit world is called the Spirit Prison (1 Pet 3:19, 4-6 and D&C 138:28). Although Spirit Prison does not appear to be a particularly pleasant place (Isa. 24:22), those who are sent there will have the opportunity to hear the gospel and choose for themselves (John 5:25). Without bodies, those in the spirit prison—who have not been baptized by proper authority or experienced the saving ordinances of the gospel—can be given those ordinances by proxy in the Holy Temple.

Temporary Hell

Not to be confused with outer darkness, where torment is everlasting, temporary hell is a place of punishment for wicked spirits who await their Resurrection (Alma 40:14) with the hope of ultimate salvation. Although this state is temporary (Acts 2:27, 31), it will still be a horrible and tormenting experience and will fulfill the purposes of the plan of salvation (D&C 76:106) before the Second Resurrection and Final Judgment.

First Resurrection

Every person who has ever lived on the earth will experience Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:21-22). Those who are living on the earth at the second coming will be changed in the twinkling of an eye (3 Nep. 28:8, D&C 43:32, and 1 Cor. 15:52) as a type of resurrection. Those who are good and just, dwelling in Paradise at the second coming of Jesus Christ, will come forth in the First Resurrection (John 5:29 and D&C 76:16-17) and will serve Christ during his thousand year millennial reign (Rev. 20:6). A second resurrection takes place before the rendering of the Final Judgment to those left in the Spirit World.

Millennium: Second Coming of Jesus Christ

The second coming of Jesus Christ is the single most anticipated event in all Christendom. In the second coming, Christ will assume his throne of glory (Matt. 25:31) and gather his children from the four quarters of the earth (1 Nep. 22:25-26). As the word millennium suggests, this period will last one thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6 and Moses 7:64-65), with Satan having no power during this period to tempt those upon the earth (D&C 43:29-33).

Satan Loosed: The Final Conflict

At the end of the one thousand year millennial reign of Christ, Satan will be let loose (Rev 20:2-3, 7-8) and there will be a final conflict of great tribulation for all mankind on the earth (Dan. 12:1). Michael will once again command the army of angels against Satan and will level a final crushing blow upon him and his army for all eternity (D&C 88:110-114).

Second Resurrection

To fulfill the necessity that all humankind will be resurrected, those who did not come forth in the First Resurrection from the spirit world—those abiding in the Spirit Prison and Temporary Hell (Rev 20:5)—will come forth in the Second Resurrection, or the Resurrection of Damnation (John 5:28-29 and D&C 76:16-17) following the end of the millennium and final conflict.

Final Judgment

When all are finally resurrected, there will be a final judgment in which we must give an account of our stewardship (D&C 72:3-4). We will be judged according to our works (Matt. 16:27 and 3 Nep. 27:25-26). And while the vast majority will be found in the books to be judged, there will be those who were cast to the earth without a body and a select few who will be cast into outer darkness as part of their second death (Rev. 20:12-14).

Many Mansions

After the renewing of the earth (Article of Faith 1:10 and Ezek. 36:35), there will not be a single heaven, but *many mansions* in the house of our Heavenly Father (John 14:2). There will be those who will come forth from the final judgment as bright as the sun and inherit the Celestial Kingdom; those who will come forth as bright as

the moon and inherit the Terrestrial Kingdom; and those who will exit as bright as the stars and inherit the Telesstial Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:40-42, Dan 12:2-3, and D&C 76: 50-90). Each resurrected being will ultimately go to that kingdom they are most comfortable with (and earned through their faith and works), with all those outside of the celestial kingdom being “dammed” from progressing above the kingdom of their inheritance.

Celestial Kingdom

Those who will inherit the Celestial Kingdom are those “who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power; And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true” (D&C 76:52-53).

As the glory of the sun, the Celestial Kingdom is sometimes referred to as the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2), and those who enter will inherit all things (Rev. 21:7) and be in the presence of our Heavenly Father. These individuals “will be gods, even the sons of God—Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. And they shall overcome all things. Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet. These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever...” (D&C 76:50-70). There are three levels (or degrees) of the Celestial Kingdom (D&C 131:1), but little has been revealed to describe these three degrees.

For those uncomfortable with the term “gods,” consider such scriptures as 1 John 3:2, 2 Thess. 2:14, Col. 3:2-4, Romans 8:16-18, Rev. 3:21 and many other Biblical scriptures that reference our becoming like Christ, being exalted, and obtaining a form of glory. As resurrected perfected beings with the glory of Christ we will be “gods,” with an emphasis on the lower case “g.”

Terrestrial Kingdom

Those who inherit the Terrestrial Kingdom are those who "...died without law; And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it. These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men" (D&C 76:72-75).

As the glory of the moon, the Terrestrial Kingdom will be a glorious existence, having the presence of Jesus Christ, the son of God, but not of the fullness of our Heavenly Father (D&C 76:76-80).

Telestial Kingdom

Those who inherit the Telestial Kingdom "are they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus. These are they who deny not the Holy Spirit. These are they who are thrust down to hell. These are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work" (D&C 76:82-85).

As the glory of the stars, the Telestial Kingdom is said to be a beautiful place, having the presence of the "Holy Ghost through the ministration of the Terrestrial, and the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial..." (D&C 76:86-89). Those in the Telestial Kingdom will enjoy the presence of the Holy Ghost through a process of ministry that flows from the Celestial kingdom, to the Terrestrial Kingdom, to the Telestial Kingdom.

Outer Darkness

Those with the mark of the beast (Rev. 19:20), who were wicked beyond all comprehension (Rev. 21:8 and Alma 40:13) and did so without ignorance in denial of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 12: 31-32), will be cast into outer darkness to experience endless torment as a second death (Rev 20:10, 14-15). These unfortunate souls are not redeemed by the Atonement of Christ and are relegated to the dwelling place of the devil, his angels, and the sons of perdition (D&C 29:36-38; 76:28-33).

Conclusion

This essay is a summary of the Great Plan of Happiness, or The Plan of Salvation. It answers all the questions asked at the beginning of this document as to where we came from and where we are going in our eternal journey. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ illuminated this plan into full view for the world to see. The Plan of Salvation should motivate each one of us to dedicate our lives to worshipping the Savior Jesus Christ, to cleansing ourselves through the Atonement of Christ on a daily basis, to keep the commandments of God, and to serve our fellow men. The Plan of Salvation should give us confidence that our Heavenly Father has a plan for us in our eternal journey, and that his plan includes our own involvement and stewardship in faith and service.

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