

## "Salvation" puzzles Mormons. Why?

Mormons may be puzzled by the question "Are you saved?" A Mormon apostle explained: Mormons have "at least six" different concepts of salvation. Here they are, with possible Mormon responses.<sup>1</sup>

### A Mormon might respond, "Yes, I am saved."

1. Of course I am saved. Everyone is saved and will have a resurrected, bodily existence forever, a loving God's gift to all mankind.

2. I am saved, because Heavenly Father will provide glorious eternal kingdoms for all people, who are His children. I strive to be worthy of the most glorious kingdom, but that will be decided on Judgment Day. In any case, God has prepared a good place for me.

3. I am saved from ignorance about the purpose of life and the destiny of men and women. Everyone can be enlightened by pondering the truths restored to earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith, found in our new scriptures and taught by our living prophets and apostles.

### A Mormon might respond, "Yes, I am saved — I hope."

4. I was born again by water baptism, immersed by a male member of the Mormon church who holds the priesthood. At that time I made covenants with God and I renew them each week at our sacrament meetings. I try to live up to the expectations of my Father in heaven.

5. I am saved by grace (God's gift) if I do my part (personal works). I understand that I make mistakes, but as long as I do my best, Christ will make up for my shortcomings. He will forgive any mistakes I might make if I confess them, repent, and never repeat them.

### A Mormon might respond, "I try hard to become saved."

6. Before I die I hope to have a successful marriage sealed in a Mormon temple. That is the gateway to eternal life, or a "forever family." If I meet all requirements God may reward me with the "fulness of salvation," and I can become in every respect like the Mother or Father in heaven. But I will have to "endure to the end." It's possible that if I fail in this life, living Mormons will fulfill certain requirements vicariously for me in their visits to Mormon temples.

Mormon religion, confusing ideas mixed with conventional words of Christian faith, makes it hard to communicate good news to Mormons. But—

On Page 2: Some Bible truths you can share with Mormons.

## You have good news for puzzled Mormons: The Bible

Galatians, for example (starts on page 1473 of a Mormon's Bible)

• Important concepts: Liberty vis-à-vis bondage (2:4; 5:1), and righteousness by faith vis-à-vis works or law (2:16,21). Paul wrote bluntly to the "foolish Galatians" considering a return to bondage and law (3:1,3).

• The law condemns; everyone fails; close doesn't count (3:22). Personal righteousness is important, of course, but salvation is by Christ's righteousness, not what may seem to be one's own meritorious life.

• One is saved—becomes a child of God—by faith, not laws (3:26); is sustained by faith (3:25); and in the end will be saved entirely by faith.

[Mormons have their own "laws and ordinances of the gospel"—complex, intrusive rules by which they regulate and judge themselves and each other. See Romans 2:14,15—"a law unto themselves...accusing or else excusing one another."]

Unfortunately, Mormons can be as confused about the Bible as about salvation. Nevertheless, the Bible has the answers Mormons need, and many want to hear.

Here's their problem with the Bible: Their church teaches—

• The Bible is incomplete and in some cases wrong.

• God inspired Joseph Smith to correct the King James version of the Bible. (But today's Mormon leaders ignore some "inspired" changes.)

• Since 1830 God has supplemented the Bible with new scriptures. They are more accurate and relevant to today's world.

• The words of living Mormon prophets "become scripture." More recent words may supersede earlier words. (But no explicit guidance is offered. Each Mormon is left to guess which words of which prophets.)

• Inspired prophets, seers, and revelators interpret the Bible today.

**REMEMBER** 1. A Mormon may be confident that his church is the only true church, but have no assurance of personal salvation. 2. A Mormon may believe that everyone is saved, or that heaven is for people who are good enough. A Mormon may strive to gain heaven. 3. Modern Mormon prophets condescend to tell us: "Bring all the good that you have and let us see if we can add to it." And: We offer "all of the children of God the opportunity to learn the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored in these latter days [and] the privilege of receiving all of the ordinances of salvation and exaltation."<sup>2</sup>

*NOTES.* 1. Dallin H. Oaks, Ensign, May 1998: "What do we say when someone asks us, 'Have you been saved?' This question, so common in the conversation of some Christians, can be puzzling to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because it is not our usual way of speaking. ...As Latter-day Saints use the words saved and salvation, there are at least six different meanings." 2. See Oaks, quoting Mormon prophet Gordon B. Hinckley and commenting on what his church offers to Christians and non-Christians alike.