

WHAT IS MORMONISM?

Mormons often say they are misunderstood. To learn about their religion, they say, don't consult its critics, but "ask us." In this paper we look at an authoritative overview of Mormonism from a man Mormons believe to be a modern-day arbiter of Christian truth: an apostle, prophet, seer, and revelator in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Dallin H. Oaks, one of the fifteen ruling authorities of the Mormon church, has stated the traditional Mormon questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? He says the answers are in the "gospel of Jesus Christ." The answers comprise the plan of salvation (also known to Mormons as "the great plan of happiness"). He said the plan can be understood "through inspiration."

You can read or listen to his speech at <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1993/10/the-great-plan-of-happiness?lang=eng>. Here's what this authority says Mormons have learned through inspiration:

- All of us existed before Creation as spirits, "sons and daughters of the Eternal Father."

- As spirits we had advanced as far as possible but lacked the opportunities of mortal life where we could "prove our willingness to keep the commandments of God" while living apart from Him.

- Assembled in a "council in heaven," we were taught "the plan": As mortals we would be "subject to death" and "soiled by sin." God would "provide us a Savior." Every mortal (past, present, and future) accepted the plan, and some of us made agreements with God about what we would do in mortality.

- Satan [Lucifer, another son of the Father] also proposed a plan [countering the plan offered by Jesus to be the Savior], but Lucifer's plan was rejected. The spirits that followed Satan will never experience mortal life.

- Marriage and raising children are essential

parts of the great plan of happiness. Human reproduction is to be the means for moving to earth over time all of the spirits waiting in heaven for their shot at mortality. Adam and Eve were commanded to multiply. Physically unable unless they disobeyed, they chose to "fall."

- Adam and Eve "transgressed" but did not "sin." Mormons "celebrate Eve's act and honor her wisdom and courage in the great episode called the Fall." Adam was happy, declaring, "...because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy...."

- Traditional marriage is the standard for Mormons, and a man's "sacred duty." "No man who is marriageable is fully living his religion who remains unmarried." Men "are expected to take the initiative in seeking marriage," and "without proper and successful marriage, one will never be exalted." [Exaltation in Mormonism means eternal life.]

- Children are our "treasures in heaven." Married couples should not postpone childbearing because that would "seriously reduce their potential to participate in furthering our Heavenly Father's plan for all of his spirit children"; they should have as many children as "they can care for."

- "Singleness, childlessness, death, and divorce frustrate ideals and postpone the fulfillment of promised blessings," but the blessings will be realized, perhaps in the Millennium, perhaps later, for those "who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right."

- "...when we have done all that we can, [the Savior] will make up the difference."

CHRISTIAN: We can commend a Mormon's commitment to marriage and family, but the religious background is not consistent with biblical Christian faith. The religion's claim of revealed truth rests almost exclusively on its own scriptures produced in the last 185 years. In his speech, Oaks cites those "revelations" 19 times.