

## Men's Discipleship

### False Religions: Mormonism Part 3

## Doctrinal Contrasts: LDS Teachings vs. Protestant Theology

### Creation, Human Nature, and the Fall of Man

- **LDS Doctrine (Pre-Mortal Existence and Nature of Man):** Mormonism teaches a far-reaching view of human origins and potential. Unlike Protestant belief, LDS doctrine asserts that all human beings existed as **intelligences or spirit children** of God before birth. *"Every person who was ever born on earth was our spirit brother or sister in heaven. The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ... so he is literally our elder brother"* [utlm.org](http://utlm.org). Thus, **human souls are uncreated in essence and co-eternal** in some form (intelligences), later begotten as spirit children of Heavenly Father and Mother [utlm.org](http://utlm.org). In this view, *"All human beings – male and female – are created in the image of God"* as His literal offspring, possessing a divine nature and destiny [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). There was a grand premortal council, and one-third of these spirits (led by Lucifer) rebelled, while the rest (including us) accepted God's plan to come to earth [utlm.org](http://utlm.org). Because of this doctrine, LDS teaching pointedly **rejects the idea of original sin or inherited guilt**. The **Second Article of Faith** states: *"We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression."* [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). Mormon scripture frames the Fall of Adam and Eve as a necessary and ultimately positive step in God's plan: *"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy."* [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). Rather than seeing humanity as totally depraved by the Fall, LDS theology views the Fall as introducing mortality and moral agency but not condemning mankind for Adam's guilt. Children are born innocent (the LDS Church denies that infants have any sin), and all accountable humans can choose good or evil by their own free will. The fall is often called a **"fall upward"** – a chance for progression. Moreover, LDS doctrine uniquely teaches that humans have the potential to **become exalted, literally gods**, in eternity. Through the plan of salvation, faithful men and women can eventually attain what God is (a concept summed up by the LDS aphorism *"As God is, man may become"*). Canonical LDS text promises exalted people will **become "gods"**: *"Then shall they be gods, because they have no end... then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power"* [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). In short, human nature in Mormonism is divine in origin and **potentially divine in destiny** – a view utterly rejected by confessional Protestants as **heretical** (confusing Creator and creature).
- **Protestant Position:** The Westminster and Baptist confessions affirm a stark **Creator-creature distinction**: human souls did *not* exist until God created them, and we can never become gods. According to WCF Chapter 4, after creating all else, *"he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image"* [ccel.org](http://ccel.org). This happened in time during the six days of creation; there is **no concept of a premortal spirit nursery**. Each

person is a direct creation of God (either immediately or through propagation), not a literal offspring of God's substance. Crucially, **Adam's fall** is understood to have plunged humanity into sin and misery. The confessions teach that when Adam (as covenant head) sinned, the guilt and corruption of that sin **passed to all his posterity**. *"Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness... and we in them whereby death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all faculties and parts of soul and body"* [the1689confession.com](http://the1689confession.com). Furthermore, *"the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity"* [the1689confession.com](http://the1689confession.com). In other words, confessional Protestantism upholds **original sin**: every human is born guilty in Adam and with a sinful nature, **utterly dependent on God's grace** for salvation. The idea that *"men will be punished only for their own sins, and not Adam's transgression"* [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org) is directly contrary to Romans 5 and is rejected as the Pelagian error. Likewise, the confessions insist that mankind after the Fall is **totally unable** to attain righteousness without God's intervention (WCF 6.4, 9.3). Any theology that downplays the Fall's effects – for example, the LDS view that the Fall was fortunate or that humans are born essentially good and able to progress to godhood – is seen as **unbiblical**. The confessions reserve worship and divine status to God alone: *"He is the alone fountain of all being... to Him is due from angels and men... whatever worship or obedience they are pleased to require"* [the1689confession.com](http://the1689confession.com). There shall **always remain an infinite gap** between the Creator and the creature. The notion that humans can become gods with all power and glory (as in LDS exaltation [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org)) is anathema to Protestant theology – it violates the fundamental monotheism of the faith. Thus, the LDS doctrines of pre-existence, denial of original sin, and exaltation of man are all considered **false** and unorthodox by confessional standards.

## Salvation, Grace, and Works (Ordinances and Exaltation)

- LDS Doctrine:** The LDS plan of salvation includes **multiple tiers of glory** and emphasizes the necessity of ordinances and good works in addition to Christ's atonement. While Mormons certainly teach that no one can be saved without Jesus Christ, they define "saved" and "salvation" in ways that include **grace-enabled effort**. The **Third Article of Faith** summarizes: *"We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."* [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). In LDS scripture, Nephi explains, *"for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do."* [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). This famous Book of Mormon passage encapsulates the LDS view that human effort ("all we can do" – repentance, righteous living, completing ordinances) is required **in conjunction with Christ's grace**. Essential ordinances include baptism (by proper authority), confirmation (laying on of hands for the Holy Ghost), endowment, and eternal marriage; without these, one cannot attain the highest salvation (exaltation). LDS scripture teaches that **certain ordinances are prerequisites for the highest heaven** – e.g., celestial marriage is required to become exalted "gods" in the world to come [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). The Doctrine and Covenants states that those who comply with the new and everlasting covenant of eternal marriage *"shall pass by the angels, and the gods... to their exaltation,"* and *"then shall they be gods"* [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). Even entrance into

lower degrees of heaven is tied to one's choices: the **Telestial, Terrestrial, and Celestial Kingdoms** correspond to one's level of faithfulness (wicked, honorable, or valiant testimony of Christ, respectively – with baptism and LDS church membership generally required for the latter two). Moreover, LDS doctrine uniquely offers salvation opportunities beyond the grave: the living perform **vicarious baptisms and other ordinances for the dead**, so that deceased souls who repent in the spirit world can still attain a kingdom of glory. Effectively, **virtually all humanity will be “saved” into one of the three heavenly kingdoms**, except a few “sons of perdition” who utterly rebel. “[Christ] saves all the works of His hands, *except those sons of perdition*... Wherefore, He saves all except them” – those excepted will go to outer darkness with the devil [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). This near-universalism (albeit in degrees of glory) and the heavy emphasis on **works/ordinances** as conditions for exaltation stand in stark contrast to the classic Protestant gospel. Evangelical and Reformed critics call the LDS plan a “**works-based**” or “grace-plus-works” system, fundamentally at odds with **sola fide** (faith alone).

- **Protestant Position:** Protestantism unequivocally teaches that **salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone – not by any works or merit of our own**. Justification, the forgiveness of sins and imputation of Christ's righteousness, is a free gift. The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 11, states: “*Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifies; **not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience... but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them***” [creeds.net](http://creeds.net). In other words, even our faith or obedience is not the basis of justification – Christ's finished work is. Our confessions explicitly reject the idea that human works contribute to earning righteousness before God. While good works *will* accompany true faith (as evidence of it), they **do not secure salvation** (see WCF 16.2). “*Faith... is the alone instrument of justification*” (WCF 11.2) [creeds.net](http://creeds.net). The grace of God in Christ is so sufficient that **nothing can be added**; indeed, WCF 11.3 emphasizes that justification is “only of free grace.” Thus, the LDS formula “saved by grace *after all we can do*” [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org) is foreign and alarming to historic Christianity, who hear in it a denial of the Protestant principle that **human works play no part in meriting salvation**. The Westminster and Baptist confessions also limit saving ordinances to **two sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper)**, which are **signs and seals** of grace, not works that earn grace. They flatly reject the notion of postmortem salvation opportunities; “*the Scripture acknowledges no place for souls apart from [heaven or hell]*” once this life ends, [fairlatterdaysaints.org](http://fairlatterdaysaints.org). As for the **outcome of salvation**, Protestants confess that the redeemed will **enjoy God forever in glory, but never become gods themselves**. The idea of **exaltation to godhood** is seen as a blasphemous distortion of glorification. Scripture teaches that believers will be resurrected and made perfectly blessed in the presence of God, **as creatures redeemed**, not as deified beings. “*Glorification*” in Protestant creeds means *being freed from sin and given immortal fellowship with God, not attaining omnipotence or worship as a god*. Therefore, every aspect of the Mormon soteriology – its synergism (grace + works), required ordinances, and goal of deification

is deemed **unbiblical** by confessional Protestants. The WCF and LBCF would label such doctrines of salvation as a different gospel entirely.

## Scripture and Authority (Revelation and Prophets)

- **LDS Doctrine:** The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints holds that the Bible is not God's sole or final revelation. The **Eighth Article of Faith** affirms, "*We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.*" [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org) In LDS belief, God has given additional scriptures (the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price) and continues to guide the Church through living **prophets and apostles**. The **Ninth Article of Faith** declares, "*We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.*" [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). This reflects the LDS view of an **open canon** – revelation did not cease with the biblical apostles. Joseph Smith claimed prophetic authority to restore lost truth, and subsequent LDS Presidents are regarded as **prophets** who can receive binding revelations for the Church. The structure of LDS authority mirrors the New Testament Church as they understand it: they have **twelve Apostles** and a First Presidency, believed to hold the **keys of authority**. According to the **Fifth Article of Faith**, "*a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority*" to preach and perform ordinances [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org) – in other words, only the LDS Church's priesthood authority (claimed to be restored by angelic visitation) is valid before God. The **Sixth Article of Faith** adds, "*We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.*" [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). Central to LDS doctrine is that after the original apostles died, a **Great Apostasy** occurred – the true church fell into error, and its authority was lost until Joseph Smith's restoration in 1830. Thus, LDS teachings hold that **no other churches** have the fullness of the gospel or authoritative priesthood; only through continuous revelation and prophetic leadership can Christ's Church be directed. This view of authority and scripture is fundamentally at odds with Protestant teaching, which sees it as an overreach that adds to God's word and undermines the sufficiency of Scripture.
- **Protestant Position:** Protestantism upholds the **Sola Scriptura** principle – that Holy Scripture (the 66-book Bible) is the complete, sufficient, and final authority for faith and practice. The Westminster Confession's first chapter pointedly states: "*The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.*" [thewestminsterstandards.com](http://thewestminsterstandards.com). In short, **no new scripture or doctrine** is to be received beyond the biblical canon. The confessions teach that after God's climactic revelation in Christ and the completion of the New Testament, the age of **special revelation has closed**. Any claim that God is giving "many great and important things" as a new revelation (as per LDS Article of Faith 9 [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org)) is flatly rejected. The Protestant Christians view the Bible as **infallible and sufficient**, and the WCF 1.8 affirms the Bible in its original languages is



authentically God's word (implicitly trusting God's providence in its transmission, rather than allowing that it's only valid "as far as translated correctly" with the open-ended caveat the LDS use [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org)). Furthermore, the confessions insist that **nothing** – no church council, no supposed prophet – can bind the conscience aside from Scripture. The London Baptist Confession 1.1 mirrors Westminster in asserting Scripture *"is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience."* Any "new" scripture (e.g., Book of Mormon) or extrabiblical prophet with equal authority to the Bible is rejected as a **false authority**.

thewestminsterstandards.com. Regarding church authority, WCF Chapter 25 acknowledges church offices (pastors, teachers, etc.), but crucially, it teaches that **there are no apostles or prophets in the church today as a source of new doctrine** – those extraordinary offices ceased with the foundation of the church. By extension, any claim like Joseph Smith's to be a singular head/prophet of the true church would be seen as akin to a false "Pope." The confession also comforts that despite corruption in history, *"nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will"* [the-highway.com](http://the-highway.com) – refuting the LDS notion of a total apostasy wiping out Christ's Church. In Protestant eyes, God preserved His church and Word through the ages; a **"restoration"** with new scriptures and prophets was neither needed nor biblical. Therefore, LDS doctrines of continuing revelation, additional scripture, and exclusive priesthood authority are deemed **erroneous**. They undermine the closed canon of Scripture and the finished work of Christ's revelation, placing Mormonism outside the bounds of orthodox Protestant belief about authority. [the-highway.com](http://the-highway.com). Protestants uphold that **the Bible alone is the final revelation**, and any claims to new prophets or scriptures are to be tested and rejected as **false doctrine** in light of Galatians 1:8.

## The Afterlife and Eternal Judgment

- **LDS Doctrine:** In LDS teaching, the afterlife is structured into multiple realms of glory rather than a binary heaven-or-hell. Immediately after death, spirits enter either **Paradise** (a state of rest for the righteous) or **Spirit Prison** (a state of learning/suffering for those who died in sins or without the gospel). Missionary work by spirits in paradise offers the unsaved a chance to repent. Ultimately, after the resurrection and final judgment, nearly all souls receive a degree of heavenly glory. The Doctrine and Covenants, Section 76 (the "Vision" of the afterlife given to Joseph Smith), describes **Three Kingdoms of Glory**: the **Celestial Kingdom** (highest, in the presence of God the Father for valiant Latter-day Saints who received Christ's gospel fully), the **Terrestrial Kingdom** (middle glory for honorable people who lacked full gospel or were lukewarm), and the **Telestial Kingdom** (the lowest heaven for the ungodly and wicked who did not repent until after death). Only the **"sons of perdition"** – those who outright reject Jesus **after receiving a sure witness** – will be damned to "Outer Darkness" with Satan. As D&C 76 explains, Jesus Christ *"saves all the works of His hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son"*, and *"he saves all except them"* [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). Thus, adulterers, murderers, and generally wicked individuals are not consigned to endless hellfire in LDS theology; they will suffer for their sins (in spirit prison and possibly during the final judgment), but eventually even they are resurrected to the **Telestial glory**, which is a kingdom of heaven (surpassingly glorious compared to mortal life, though devoid of God's immediate

presence). D&C 76:81–89 says the Telestial kingdom’s inhabitants are innumerable as the stars and receive a glory still greater than mortal understanding. The **Terrestrial kingdom** is for the “honorable” who refused the full gospel; the **Celestial** is for faithful covenant-keepers who overcome by Jesus’s merits (and in the highest tier of the Celestial, they become exalted gods). To LDS believers, this multilayered heaven showcases God’s mercy and perfect justice, providing a place for everyone’s level of righteousness. **Hell** (“Outer Darkness”) is reserved for the truly devilish few. This doctrine starkly contradicts the traditional Christian view of a dual destiny (eternal life vs eternal damnation). Protestants, therefore, regard the LDS afterlife scheme as **unbiblical**, diluting the seriousness of eternal judgment and deviating from Scripture’s teaching of heaven and hell.

- **Protestant Confessional Position:** The Westminster and London Baptist Confessions teach a much simpler and more sobering view of the afterlife: **immediate heaven or hell at death, followed by the resurrection and final judgment, leading to the eternal state – everlasting life for the redeemed and everlasting punishment for the lost.** WCF Chapter 32:1 declares: *“The bodies of men, after death, return to dust... but their souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.”* [fairlatterdaysaints.org](http://fairlatterdaysaints.org). This statement pointedly refutes any notion of third kingdoms or intermediate glories – there are exactly **two ultimate destinies** for human souls. After the final resurrection, the confessions (echoing Scripture) teach that **Christ will judge all**. Those saved by Christ will enjoy eternal blessedness in the presence of God (often referred to as “heaven” or, in the consummation, the New Heavens and New Earth), and those who are not saved will be consigned to **everlasting punishment** for their sins (hell, described in WCF 32 and 33). *“On the last day... the righteous, in glorified bodies, shall receive and inherit the kingdom forever, but the wicked shall be sentenced to everlasting fire”* (summarizing WCF 33.2). There is **no second chance after death**, according to Hebrews 9:27, so the confessions reject the LDS idea of postmortem evangelism and conversion. The concept of virtually universal salvation (with only a tiny group in Outer Darkness) is utterly foreign to Protestant doctrine; rather, Scripture warns of a broad road leading to destruction for many. Furthermore, Protestant creeds know nothing of a gradation of heavenly glory except that **believers will be rewarded differently** for their works (degrees of reward, perhaps, but **all** the redeemed enjoy the same heaven with God, and all the lost are in the same hell apart from God’s face). The LDS teaching that even the wicked ultimately inherit a kingdom of glory (albeit the lowest) runs against the confessional affirmation that *“the souls of the wicked... remain in torments and utter darkness”* until judgment, and then face the **second death** [fairlatterdaysaints.org](http://fairlatterdaysaints.org). To Reformed Protestants, the LDS afterlife appears to minimize the urgency of the gospel and the horror of hell, and to introduce unbiblical levels of complexity. The **binary outcome** (eternal life vs eternal death) upheld in the confessions is seen as directly

contradicted by the Mormon three-tier heaven. Therefore, confessional theologians deem the LDS doctrine of the afterlife **false** – lacking scriptural warrant and contradicting clear teachings of Christ and the apostles. The WCF sums up the orthodox view succinctly and in direct opposition to Mormonism: “***Besides these two places (heaven for the righteous, hell for the wicked) ... the Scripture acknowledgeth none.***” [fairlatterdaysaints.org](http://fairlatterdaysaints.org). This makes the divide unmistakable: the Mormon three-degree glory model is unrecognized and rejected in Protestant dogma, which considers it another **serious doctrinal error** of LDS theology.