

What is the Mormon Church. . . . really?

Mormon scriptures and the immutable character of God

Does God change his mind?
Can scriptures change?

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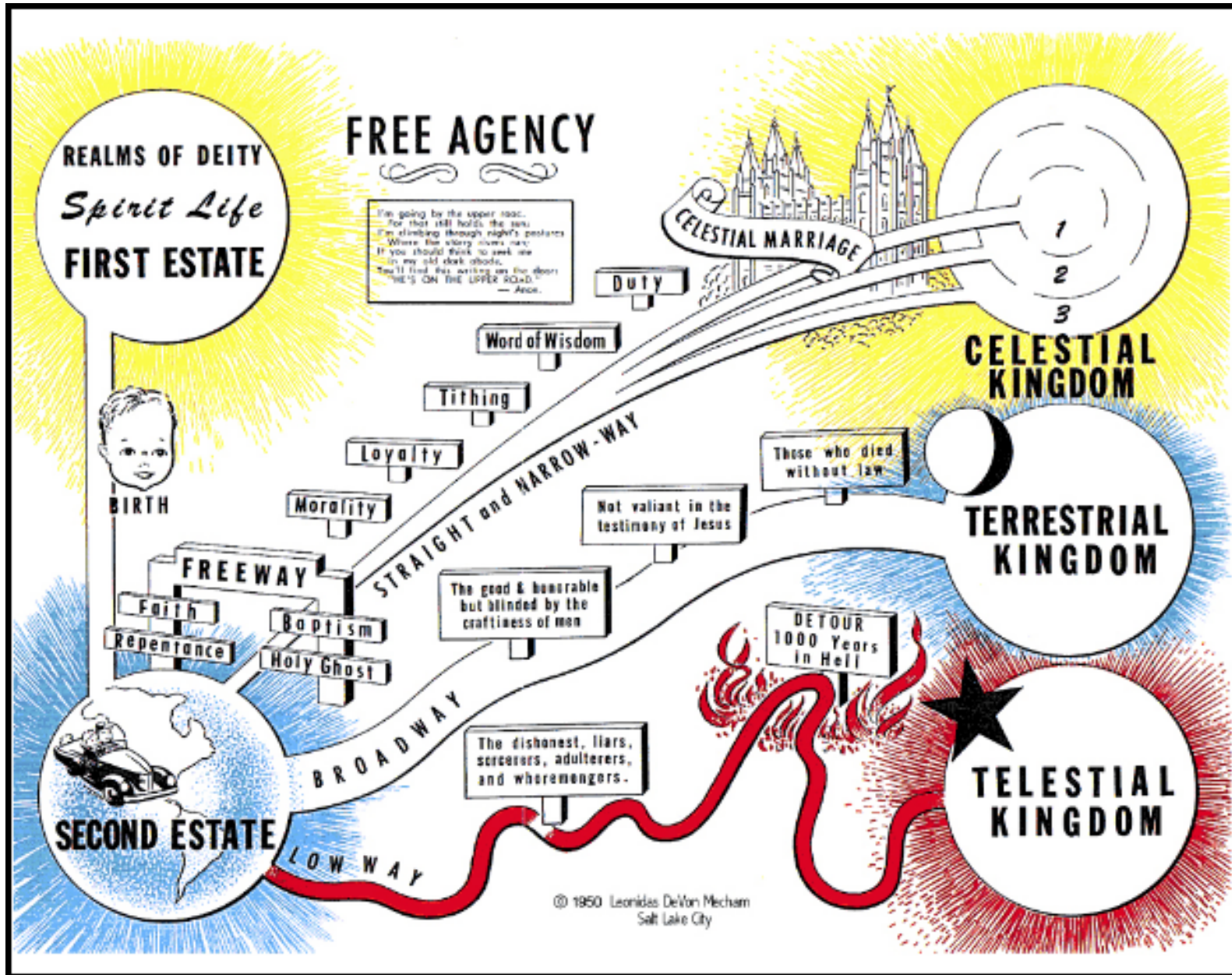
Review

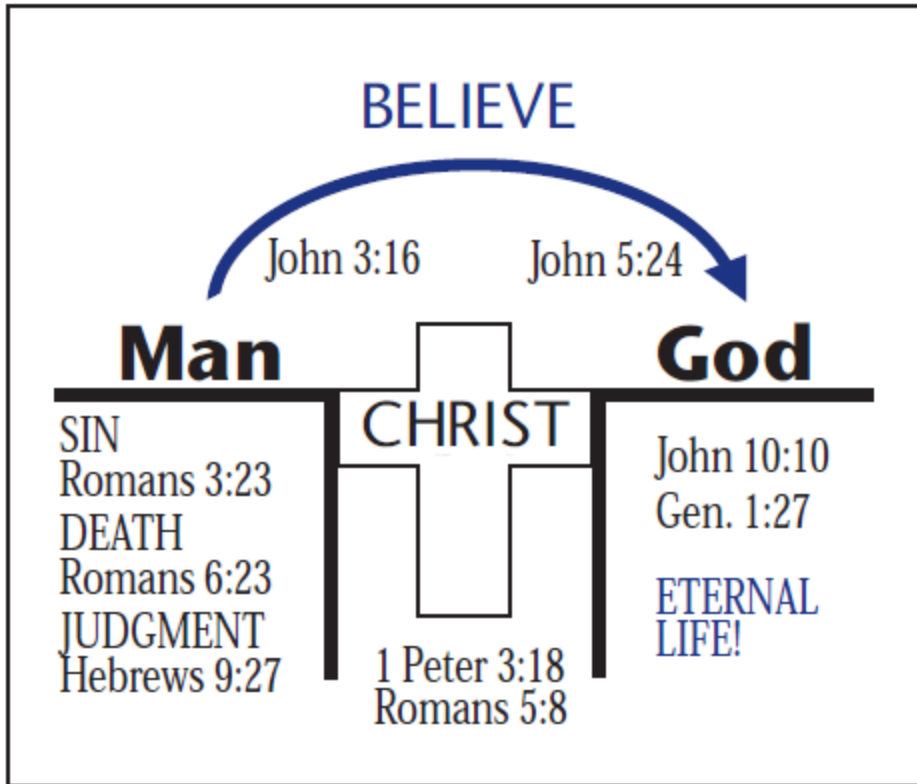
- Previous study of the Book of Mormon
 - “You rely upon things which are written, for in them, (the Book of Mormon) are **all things** written concerning my church, my gospel, my rock.” Joseph Smith, Book of Commandments
 - Many doctrines similar to the Bible (almost 20% quotes from Bible)
 - Errors in history, archeology, anthropology
- Additional scriptural books/authority:
 - *Doctrine and Covenants* (early version: *Book of Commandments*)
 - *Pearl of Great Price*
 - Words of prophets
- These later books are the sources of primary disagreement with historic Christian faith theologically

Some of the beliefs of the Mormon church not in *Book of Mormon*

- Organization of the church
- Priesthoods—Mechizedekian & Aaronic
- Plurality of the gods
- God is an exalted man
- Many may become God
- Three degrees of heaven
- Plurality of wives
- The Word of Wisdom
- Pre-existence of man's spirit
- Eternal progression
- Baptism for the dead
- Celestial marriage

Core beliefs that define the church today from www.mormonquotes.com

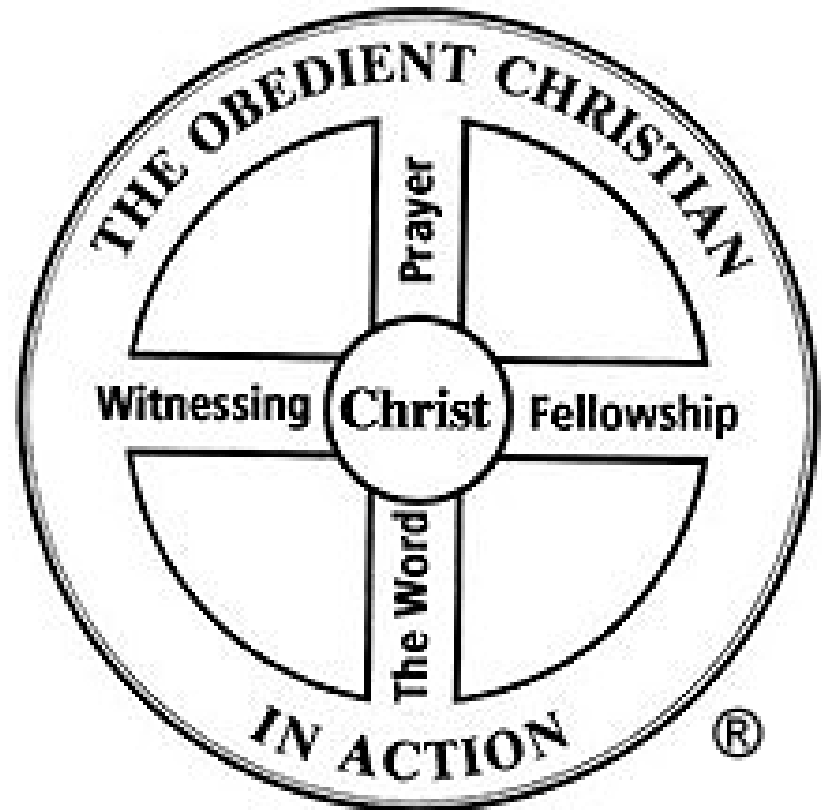




For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Ephesians 2:8-10

In contrast, the Biblical Christian view:

- Salvation a free gift, made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus
- Once saved, we live **for Christ** in obedience service based on the Word of God
- We are eternally creatures, saved servants, serving an unchanging God



Why these changes are accepted

- Primary reason: **Authority of Prophets**
- As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are blessed to be led by living prophets—inspired men called to speak for the Lord, as did Moses, Isaiah, Peter, Paul, Nephi, Mormon, and other prophets of the scriptures. Def. of Prophets, mormon.org
- I am learned, and know more than all the world put together. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*
- Brigham Young has said "when he sends forth his discourses to the world they may call them Scripture." I say now, when they are copied and approved by me they are as good Scripture as is couched in this Bible."
Brigham Young, Journal Of Discourses

Authority of prophets is like that of God because

- In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct charges of blasphemy, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be." James Talmage, The Articles of Faith
- Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. Joseph Smith, Discourses of the Prophet
- Therefore, if a man may speak as God, Joseph Smith could modify his previous declaration to say: "You rely upon the things that are written, for in them are all things written concerning the **foundation of** my church, my gospel, and my rock."

How to respond

- There is really no way to ultimately refute many Mormon claims
 - See last week's lesson: darkened minds, group think, human pride (sinner vs. potential god)
- But we can and must be a witness to truth
 - Learn it
 - Share it
 - Pray for our protection and opportunities to share
- Two issues here we need to know well
 - The unchangeable character of God—this week
 - The nature of progressive revelation—next week

God's immutability, an intrinsic part of his character

- The *Westminster Catechism*, in presenting a brief definition of God, succinctly says that He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His Being.
- God's nature or character is immutable, that is, it has never worsened or bettered - it remains the same. God does not change, indeed, he cannot change, both in:
 - His being (ontologically)
 - His will (decretally)

Immutability is a key distinction between the Creator and the creature.

- The Creator is unchangeable, the creature is changeable.
- And all of creation is tarred with the brush of changeability, mutability.
- All that we see around us is subject to change, simply because it is not eternal, it has a beginning and it will have an ending - but this great Divinity, our great God Jehovah, never changes!
- God's nature doesn't change. . . .
- Before creation, before matter came into existence, God was there - unchanged from what He is at this moment in time.
- Isaiah says: 'He is the first and He is the last' - and that is repeated in the apocalypse: the first and the last, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the unchangeable, eternal, immutable God!
- <http://www.preachtheword.com/sermon/god10.shtml>--
excellent to read all of it

Biblical evidence for God's immutability: OT

- Numbers 23:19 - "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent."
- 1 Samuel 15:29 - "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent."
- Psalm 90:1-2 "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."
- Psalms 102:26 - "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed."
- Malachi 3:6 - "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Biblical evidence for God's immutability: NT

- 2 Timothy 2:13 - "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."
- Hebrews 6:17,18 - "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."
- James 1:17 - "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Charles Spurgeon's Sermon on Immutability of God

- <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0001.htm> highly recommend you read it all
- Suppose he is infinite and then changes, he must become finite, and could not be God; either he is finite today and finite tomorrow, or infinite today and finite tomorrow, or finite today and infinite tomorrow—all of which suppositions are equally absurd.
- The fact of his being an infinite being at once quashes the thought of his being a changeable being. Infinity has written on its very brow the word "immutability."
- ***When does it change? A bit like evolution: Monkey to man? Man to god?***
- But objections to this.....

Objection #1: God changes because he repents

- How does the idiom concerning God repenting (cf. Exodus 32:9,10; 1 Samuel 15:11) square with the unalterable fixity of immutability?
- When the Bible seems to suggest that God did in fact alter his course of action away from a previously declared course of action, one should understand that his "new course" is only his settled, immutably certain response in keeping with the principles of conduct respecting himself which He himself declared (Jeremiah 18:7-10).
- God always acts the same way toward moral evil and the same way toward moral good. In his every reaction to men's responses to him, the immutable moral fixity of his character is evident. If people alter their relations to him, He will always respond in a manner consistent with his immutably holy character (see Jonah 3:3-10; also read Psalms 18:25-27).

Objection #2: Did God change when Jesus became man?

- He is the great I AM—the Great Unchangeable. Mark you, his essence did not undergo a change when it became united with the manhood.
- When Christ in past years did gird himself with mortal clay, the essence of his divinity was not changed; flesh did not become God, nor did God become flesh by a real actual change of nature; the two were united in hypostatical union, but the Godhead was still the same.

<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0001.htm>

- Why many heretical doctrines about Christ wrong
 - Not changing from one to another: Modalism
 - Not mixed together: Eutychianism
 - Not combined into a new God-man nature: Monophysitism.
 - Not progressing to god-likeness: New Age
 - Not progressing to godhood: Mormonism

Hypostatic Union

- A theological term used with reference to the Incarnation to express the revealed truth that ***in Christ one person subsists in two natures the Divine and the human.*** *Hypostasis* means, literally, that which lies beneath as basis or foundation. *From the Catholic Encyclopedia*
- ***How the natures of Christ function within one person is a mystery comparable to the Trinity.*** Because we cannot explain the finer details does not mean that the doctrine is untrue. . . “for one person to be both infinite and finite simultaneously seems impossible.” It is for this reason that he also stated, “This is one of the most difficult of all theological problems, ranking with the Trinity and the seeming paradox of human free will and divine sovereignty.”
- *“In the incarnation of the Son of God, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, yet with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without mixture or confusion so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man.”*
- From: [http://hypostaticunion.com/Quotations from Craig Blaising, “Hypostatic Union,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology \(Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984\), 540.](http://hypostaticunion.com/Quotations from Craig Blaising, “Hypostatic Union,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 540.)

As our God, so is our scripture

- Psalm 119 - that great testimony of the word of God - in verse 89 and verse 152 we read this: 'For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever'.
- His nature never changes, His character doesn't change, truth doesn't change, and His purposes don't change. . . . Balaam, in Num. 23 ;19, tells us that 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?'.
<http://www.preachtheword.com/sermon/god10.shtml>
- *If it comes from an unchanging God, it is unchanging*
- *Therefore, we can trust in unchanging truth of the Bible, not what some leader in the church might say to change it*

How God not changing benefits us

- Let me say a word on THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS UNCHANGEABLE GOD IS A BENEFIT. "I am God, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.
Malachi 3:6 (Spurgeon)
- Since their good works did not win his affection, bad works cannot sever that affection;
- Since their righteousness did not bind his love to them, so their wickedness cannot snap the golden links.
- He loved them out of pure sovereign grace, and he will love them still.
- But we should have been consumed by the devil, and by our enemies—consumed by the world, consumed by our sins, by our trials, and in a hundred other ways, if God had ever changed.

Conclusion: Spurgeon again

- Study, internalize, express the immutable character of our God
- As a basis for all we believe and act:
 - ***When we think, meditate, carefully study the immutability of God....how can we then assume that any less could be God—if all can change, what and when do you trust...***
- As a basis for the assurance of our salvation
 - ***He loves as much now as he did then, and when suns shall cease to shine, and moons to show their feeble light, he still shall love on for ever and for ever.***