

# SALVATION

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## CHAPTER 1 SEEK SALVATION

### WHY WE SEEK SALVATION

Salvation—blessed word, word of wondrous beauty—what is it, and how is it gained?

There neither is nor can be anything more important for any man in any age than to, gain salvation.

Among all the subjects that do or can enter the mind of man, none is as important as salvation. The study of salvation is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega of all research, all scholarship. Salvation is the subject of subjects.

Salvation is the object and end of our existence. The very earth itself was created and peopled for the express purpose of enabling the children of God to work out their salvation. Deity himself has as his work, as the enterprise in which he devotes all of his omnipotent powers, the providing of immortality and eternal life for man.<sup>1</sup>

Earth life is a testing period; mortals who live here are on probation. Those who pass the test “shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”<sup>2</sup> Their reward is salvation, and “there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation.”<sup>3</sup>

“Men are, that they might have joy,”<sup>4</sup> a status attained in part through the process of seeking salvation while in this life, but in full only by those who attain immortal glory in the next life.<sup>5</sup> Those who do the works of righteousness are promised “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>6</sup> Because they “enjoy the words of eternal life” here and now, their inheritance becomes one of “eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>7</sup> Thus in seeking salvation, men receive while yet in mortality, that peace, that enjoyment, that complete satisfaction of body and soul which can be found In no other way; and then in eternity they gain that fulness of Joy possessed only by saved beings.

### ALL MEN SEEK SALVATION

That all men do in fact desire salvation is not open to question. In the ultimate and basic sense men are not religious on the one hand or irreligious on the other. There is not one

<sup>1</sup> Moses 1:39.  
<sup>2</sup> Abraham 3:26.  
<sup>3</sup> D&C 6:13.  
<sup>4</sup> 2 Nephi 2:25.  
<sup>5</sup> D&C 93:33-34.  
<sup>6</sup> D&C 59:23.  
<sup>7</sup> Moses 6:59.

group whose interest centers in salvation and another which could not care less about spiritual things. All men want to worship; all are religious by instinct; all have an inborn inclination to spiritual things.

When the spirit children of God pass from pre-existence to their earthly probation they come with the instinctive desire to worship. They are born with a conscience so that they automatically know right from wrong. The light of Christ is given to every person born into the world; this Light guides and strives with men unless they openly rebel and give themselves up to wickedness as did the Jaredites and Nephites before their destruction.<sup>88</sup>

When we speak of men being either religious or irreligious, we mean their natural instincts to worship are centered either in Deity or in some carnal substitute for true religion. The question is not, shall we worship, but what to worship and how to worship.

All men seek salvation in one way or another, and in their search the issues are: Where is the truth? Do we have the religion revealed from heaven or one that is man made? Is our worship only a form of godliness with no saving power, or do we have the faith and power once delivered to the saints? Do we actually have the laws and power which will take us where God and Christ are and give us salvation in their Kingdom?

## SEEK KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SALVATION

Every man should have as his chief concern the attainment of salvation; and the more a man knows about the doctrines of salvation, the greater will be the possibility of his gaining so great a reward. Indeed, before a man can “work out” his “own salvation with fear and trembling” before God,<sup>99</sup> he must come to a knowledge of what salvation is and learn the laws which must be obeyed if he is to gain it.

Before obedience comes knowledge; understanding precedes conformity; learning walks ahead of living. Men elect to live righteously because they know what righteousness is and how to obtain it. The more comprehensive a man’s knowledge of God and his laws, the greater will be the desire to, live like God lives and to go where God is.

Joseph Smith said: “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God. But we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them.”<sup>1010</sup>

Hence we find the Prophet giving such counsel as: “I advise all to go on to perfection, and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness.”<sup>1111</sup>

<sup>88</sup> D&C 1:33; 84:44-48; Ether 15:19; Moro. 7:12-18; 8:27-30; 9:1-6.

<sup>99</sup> Philip. 2:12.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 255-6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

“The great plan of salvation is a theme which ought to occupy our strict attention.”<sup>12</sup>

“All men know that they must die. And it is important that we should understand the reasons and causes of our exposure to the vicissitudes of life and death, and the designs and purposes of God in our coming into the world, our sufferings here, and our departure hence. What is the object of our coming into existence, then dying and falling away, to be here no more? It is but reasonable to suppose that God would reveal something in reference to the matter, and it is a subject we ought to study more than any other. We ought to study it day and night, for the world is ignorant in reference to their true condition and relation. If we have any claim on our Heavenly Father for anything, it is for knowledge on this important subject.”<sup>13</sup>

We are commanded to seek knowledge about salvation. From the Lord himself come these decrees:

“Search the scriptures.”<sup>14</sup>

“Ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah ....”

“Give heed to my words ....

“Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things.”<sup>15</sup>

“Search these commandments.”<sup>16</sup>

“Study my word.”<sup>17</sup>

“Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life.”<sup>18</sup>

“Give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.”<sup>19</sup>

“Teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon.”<sup>20</sup>

“Teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>14</sup> John 5:39.

<sup>15</sup> 3 Ne. 23:1, 4-5; 20:11.

<sup>16</sup> D&C 1:37; 6:7.

<sup>17</sup> D&C 11:22; 32:4.

<sup>18</sup> D&C 84:85; Jos. Smith 1:37.

<sup>19</sup> D&C 84:43-44; Matt. 4:4.

<sup>20</sup> D&C 42:12.

<sup>21</sup> D&C 88:77-78.

One of the most excellent of all scriptural passages directing us to study, to meditate, to think about and treasure up the words of eternal life, was given by Moses. After restating many of the truths of salvation for ancient Israel, he said: “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”<sup>2222</sup>

What more need be said? We are commanded to study and teach the doctrines of the kingdom; to treasure up the saving truths of the gospel; to drink deeply from the fountain of living waters; to meditate continually upon the words of eternal life; to make the knowledge of and the search for salvation the central and supreme goal of our lives.

## **SALVATION COMPREHENDS ALL THINGS**

It is impossible to overstate the importance, magnitude, and scope of salvation.

In the name of salvation Adam ate the forbidden fruit, Enoch walked with God, Noah built the ark, Moriancumer moved Mount Zerin, and God talked with Moses.

In the name of salvation Christ came, made flesh his tabernacle, ministered among men, worked mighty miracles, wrought out the infinite and eternal atonement, gained all power in heaven and on earth, ascended to his Father, and now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In the name of salvation Peter and Paul preached the gospel, apostles and prophets suffered persecution, the primitive Christians accepted martyrdom in the arenas of Rome, and thousands of humble and unknown saints loved not their lives unto death.

In the name of salvation rivers change course, mountains move, seas divide, continents break asunder, floods cover the earth, and the sun stands still.

In the name of salvation faith-filled mortals subdue kingdoms, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, triumph over every earthly thing.

In the name of salvation signs follow the faithful, the sick are healed, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame leap, plagues cease, the dead live again.

In the name of salvation the heavens open, angels descend, men are caught up to the third heaven, God speaks, and the Holy Ghost is poured out upon men.

In the name of salvation the earth itself was created, Christ was chosen as the foreordained Lamb of God, the gospel was preached from the beginning, and prophets and preachers of righteousness wore out their lives in teaching its truths.

In the name of salvation men are born again, the unclean become pure, saints are sanctified, some are translated, the resurrection passes upon all, and those who overcome all things become kings and priests, sons of God, joint-heirs with Christ.

Salvation—blessed, noble concept—has done more to direct and control the entire history of the world than any other thing. It is the cry that assembles armies, builds up kingdoms, topples thrones, makes rich the merchants of the earth.

Salvation is in all things, and through all things, and round about all things. Because of it all things are, and without it there would be no purpose in creation, no reason for our being, no merit in Christ's redemption, no need for a resurrection, no peace here or eternal life hereafter.

And yet salvation is the unknown subject; one concerning which there is more confusion than any other; one that has been twisted, perverted, distorted above all others—all of which but bears witness of the importance of the subject: for in what other field is Lucifer at such great pains to persuade men to accept false teachings, teachings in which there is no saving power.

## **HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW ABOUT SALVATION?**

Pagans and Christians alike, by their own frank admissions, know little, almost nothing, about what constitutes salvation. Some expect to feast in the Valhalla of Odin, others to dwell amid delights in Elysian fields, others to sing ceaseless paeons of praise to an unknowable and incomprehensible God in a place called heaven.

To gain one of the many types of unknown salvation a person must, as the case may be, die a hero's death, or confess the Lord Jesus with the lips, or submit to the domination of a specific church, or simply be predestined to inherit eternal glory regardless of any personal act. Salvation comes (as various religionists suppose!) by faith alone, or by sacrificing children to Moloch, or by prayers which release the imprisoned from purgatory, or by the special intercession of selected saints, or by living a good life, or what have you.

Even among those who have the added advantage of latter-day revelation there are many who do not have a clear understanding of the doctrines of salvation. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should be gospel scholars; they should know and practice such truths about salvation as have been revealed anew in this day. How much do the members of the kingdom itself know about the eternal plan of salvation?

What does it mean to know God? To have the mind of Christ? To gain the fulness of the Father? To be a joint-heir with Christ?

Who are the sons of God by adoption? How do we become members of the Church of the Firstborn? Who is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise? How can a mortal man make his calling and election sure?

What is exaltation? Eternal life? Can a person gain either of these without celestial marriage? Is there marrying and giving in marriage in the resurrection?

When will we gain salvation? Does the gospel plan offer us a second change to gain the celestial glory? Do all children go to the celestial kingdom? Will the earth be saved? The animal creation?

Upon what foundation does the atonement rest? Are eternal life and salvation one and the same? Who is saved by grace? How many degrees of glory are there?

And what of damnation? Who is thrust down to hell? Do such remain in torment forever? What is paradise? The spirit prison?

Must we hold the priesthood to be saved? Partake worthily of the sacrament? Join the true Church? Come forth in the first resurrection? Receive personal revelation?

What is meant by eternal progression? Is there progression from one kingdom of glory to another?

Who will be saved? The Latter-day Saints only? “Lord, are there few that be saved?”<sup>23</sup><sup>23</sup> Or many? Will I be one?

## HOW WE GAIN KNOWLEDGE OF SALVATION

A knowledge of salvation can be gained in two ways: 1. By a study of what God has revealed to others; and 2. By personal revelation from him who is the Author of salvation. If the knowledge sought and gained is to be sufficient to guarantee salvation itself to the seeker, it must come from both sources.

When God’s servants speak or write by the power of the Holy Ghost, their utterances and writings are scripture.<sup>24</sup><sup>24</sup> Some of this ever increasing and eternally important reservoir of revealed truth is preserved and published for all to study; portions of that which is published, because of their general application and value, have been canonized and adopted as standards to govern and guide in the field of religion.

The Standard Works—the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price—are official sources of saving knowledge. They mark the course and chart the way; they have been revealed, recorded, and published for the very purpose of

<sup>23</sup> Luke 13:23.  
<sup>24</sup> <sup>2</sup> Tim. 3:15-17.

guiding men in their search for salvation. The “holy scriptures,” Paul told Timothy, “are able to make thee wise unto salvation.”

Next in importance to the Standard Works come the inspired utterances of apostles and prophets, with particular emphasis on those of Joseph Smith, the great Prophet of this final dispensation. “All scripture,” Paul continues, “is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”<sup>25</sup>

The Bible is a superlative guide, “as far as it is translated correctly.”<sup>26</sup> Joseph Smith said, “I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors.”<sup>27</sup> All of the volumes of latter-day revelation are accurate. Inspired statements of Joseph Smith and others which are not in the Standard Works are preserved for us as accurately as human power permits.

But all scripture must be interpreted and its true meaning found. Wresting the scriptures, twisting and distorting their true meanings and Intents, is not an uncommon practice among many. When Joseph Smith, even before the prophetic mantle had fallen on him, sought to learn which of all the churches was right and which he should Join, he found “the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.” Hence his decision to ask of God, to seek wisdom by direct revelation, thus confirming the course all must follow to gain ultimate certainty in spiritual matters.<sup>28</sup>

Peter pointed out the path leading to a true interpretation of scripture when he wrote: “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>29</sup> That is, since the scriptures were given by the power of the Holy Ghost, their true meaning and intent can only be known by the power of that same Holy Spirit. Just as prophets can make inspired utterances only “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost,”<sup>30</sup> so students of the Scriptures can understand these utterances correctly and fully only when that same Spirit rests upon them.

However, since all men are not prepared and able to receive personal revelation at all times, men who have the spirit of discernment and understanding are needed to explain and interpret the revelations. Such inspired interpreters are always found in the true Church of God. As Paul said, there are in the earthly kingdom apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers whose responsibility it is to perfect the saints, do the work of the ministry, and teach and edify the members of the Church. Where these

<sup>25</sup> 2 Tim. 3:15-17.  
<sup>26</sup> Eight Article of Faith.  
<sup>27</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 327.  
<sup>28</sup> Jos. Smith 2:8-20.  
<sup>29</sup> 2 Pet. 1:20-21.  
<sup>30</sup> D&C 68:4.

inspired men are the saints are not “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”<sup>31</sup> As long as there are apostles and prophets guiding the Church, the truths about salvation will be known, and men will be able to do those things which will assure them of eternal life in the kingdom of God.

Now it is our purpose to seek salvation, to learn the laws which govern its attainment, and to experience the spiritual uplift which comes to those who love the Lord. We shall “seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”<sup>32</sup> We shall consider the subject of salvation, topic by topic, quoting the revelations and reasoning in plainness and simplicity. There will be certain desired and designed duplication in order to consider each topic as a unit and also to tie each in with related topics. But out of it all the apt and spiritual student will be able both to learn the doctrines of salvation and to make them live in his life—until he too receives revelation and experiences the power of faith, as do all prophets and earnest truth seekers.

“Come now, and let us reason together.”<sup>33</sup>

“It is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:27-28.  
<sup>32</sup> D&C 88:118.  
<sup>33</sup> Isa. 1:18.  
<sup>34</sup> Hos. 10:12.