

Have You Been Saved?

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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. We tend to speak of “saved” or “salvation” as a future event rather than something that has already been realized.

Good Christian people sometimes attach different meanings to some key gospel terms like saved or salvation. If we answer according to what our questioner probably means in asking if we have been “saved,” our answer must be “yes.” If we answer according to the various meanings we attach to the terms saved or salvation, our answer will be either “yes” or “yes, but with conditions.”

I.

As I understand what is meant by the good Christians who speak in these terms, we are “saved” when we sincerely declare or confess that we have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. This meaning relies on words the Apostle Paul taught the Christians of his day:

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9–10).

To Latter-day Saints, the words saved and salvation in this teaching signify a present covenant relationship with Jesus Christ in which we are assured salvation from the consequences of sin if we are obedient. Every sincere Latter-day Saint is “saved” according to this meaning. We have been converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we have experienced repentance and baptism, and we are renewing our covenants of baptism by partaking of the sacrament.

II.

As Latter-day Saints use the words saved and

salvation, there are at least six different meanings. According to some of these, our salvation is assured—we are already saved. In others, salvation must be spoken of as a future event (e.g., 1 Cor. 5:5) or as conditioned upon a future event (e.g., Mark 13:13). But in all of these meanings, or kinds of salvation, salvation is in and through Jesus Christ.

First, all mortals have been saved from the permanence of death through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

As to salvation from sin and the consequences of sin, our answer to the question of whether or not we have been saved is “yes, but with conditions.” Our third article of faith declares our belief:

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel” (A of F 1:3).

Many Bible verses declare that Jesus came to take away the sins of the world (e.g., John 1:29; Matt. 26:28). The New Testament frequently refers to the grace of God and to salvation by grace (e.g., John 1:17; Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:8). But it also has many specific commandments on personal behavior, and many references to the importance of works (e.g., Matt. 5:16; Eph. 2:10; James 2:14–17). In addition, the Savior taught that we must endure to the end in order to be saved (see Matt. 10:22; Mark 13:13).

Relying upon the totality of Bible teachings and upon clarifications received through modern revelation, we testify that being cleansed from sin through Christ’s Atonement is conditioned upon the individual sinner’s faith, which must be manifested by obedience to the Lord’s command to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost (see Acts 2:37–38). “Verily, verily, I say unto thee,” Jesus taught, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5; see also Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37–38). Believers who have had this required rebirth at the hands of those having authority have already been saved from sin conditionally, but they will not be saved finally until they have completed their mortal probation with the required

continuing repentance, faithfulness, service, and enduring to the end.

Some Christians accuse Latter-day Saints who give this answer of denying the grace of God through claiming they can earn their own salvation. We answer this accusation with the words of two Book of Mormon prophets. Nephi taught, “For we labor diligently ... to persuade our children ... to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23). And what is “all we can do”? It surely includes repentance (see Alma 24:11) and baptism, keeping the commandments, and enduring to the end. Moroni pleaded, “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moro. 10:32).

We are not saved in our sins, as by being unconditionally saved through confessing Christ and then, inevitably, committing sins in our remaining lives (see Alma 11:36–37). We are saved from our sins (see Hel. 5:10) by a weekly renewal of our repentance and cleansing through the grace of God and His blessed plan of salvation (see 3 Ne. 9:20–22).

The question of whether a person has been saved is sometimes phrased in terms of whether that person has been “born again.” Being “born again” is a familiar reference in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. As noted earlier, Jesus taught that except a man was “born again” (John 3:3), of water and of the Spirit, he could not enter into the kingdom of God (see John 3:5). The Book of Mormon has many teachings about the necessity of being “born again” or “born of God” (Mosiah 27:25; see Mosiah 27:24–26; Alma 36:24, 26; Moses 6:59). As we understand these scriptures, our answer to whether we have been born again is clearly “yes.” We were born again when we entered into a covenant relationship with our Savior by being born of water and of the Spirit and by taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ. We can renew that rebirth each Sabbath when we partake of the sacrament.

Latter-day Saints affirm that those who have been born again in this way are spiritually begotten sons and daughters of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 5:7; Mosiah 15:9–13; Mosiah 27:25). Nevertheless, in order to realize the intended blessings of this born-again status, we must still keep our covenants and endure to the end. In the meantime, through the grace of God, we have been born again as new creatures with new spiritual parentage and the prospects of a glorious inheritance.

A fourth meaning of being saved is to be saved from

the darkness of ignorance of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the purpose of life, and of the destiny of men and women. The gospel made known to us by the teachings of Jesus Christ has given us this salvation. “I am the light of the world,” Jesus taught; “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12; see also John 12:46).

For Latter-day Saints, being “saved” can also mean being saved or delivered from the second death (meaning the final spiritual death) by assurance of a kingdom of glory in the world to come (see 1 Cor. 15:40–42). Just as the Resurrection is universal, we affirm that every person who ever lived upon the face of the earth—except for a very few—is assured of salvation in this sense. As we read in modern revelation:

“And this is the gospel, the glad tidings ...

“That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

“That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him;

“Who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him” (D&C 76:40–43; emphasis added).

The prophet Brigham Young taught that doctrine when he declared that “every person who does not sin away the day of grace, and become an angel to the Devil, will be brought forth to inherit a kingdom of glory” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 288). This meaning of saved ennoble the whole human race through the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In this sense of the word, all should answer: “Yes, I have been saved. Glory to God for the gospel and gift and grace of His Son!”

Finally, in another usage familiar [page 57] and unique to Latter-day Saints, the words saved and salvation are also used to denote exaltation or eternal life (see Abr. 2:11). This is sometimes referred to as the “fulness of salvation” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 1:242). This salvation requires more than repentance and baptism by appropriate priesthood authority. It also requires the making of sacred covenants, including eternal marriage, in the temples of God, and faithfulness to those covenants by enduring to the end. If we use the word salvation to mean “exaltation,” it is premature for any of us to say that we have been “saved” in mortality. That glorious status can

only follow the final judgment of Him who is the Great Judge of the living and the dead.

I have suggested that the short answer to the question of whether a faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been saved or born again must be a fervent “yes.” Our covenant relationship with our Savior puts us in that “saved” or “born again” condition meant by those who ask this question. Some modern prophets have also used “salvation” or “saved” in that same present sense. President Brigham Young declared:

“It is present salvation and the present influence of the Holy Ghost that we need every day to keep us on saving ground. . . .

“I want present salvation. . . . Life is for us, and it is for us to receive it today, and not wait for the Millennium. Let us take a course to be saved today” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 15–16). President David O. McKay spoke of the revealed gospel of Jesus Christ in that same present sense of “salvation here—here and now” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 6).

III.

I will conclude by discussing another important question members and leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are asked by others: “Why do you send missionaries to preach to other Christians?” Sometimes this is asked with curiosity and sometimes with resentment.

My most memorable experience with that question occurred some years ago in what we then called the Eastern Bloc. After many years of Communist hostility to religion, these countries were suddenly and miraculously given a measure of religious freedom. When that door opened, many Christian faiths sent missionaries. As part of our preparation to do so, the First Presidency sent members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to meet with government and church leaders in these countries. Our assignment was to introduce ourselves and to explain what our missionaries would be doing.

Elder Russell M. Nelson and I called on the leader of the Orthodox Church in one of these countries. Here was a man who had helped keep the light of Christianity burning through the dark decades of Communist repression. I noted in my journal that he was a warm and gracious man who impressed me as a servant of the Lord. I mention this so that you will not think there was any spirit of arrogance or contention in our conversation of nearly an hour. Our visit was pleasant and cordial, filled with the goodwill that should always characterize conversations between men and women who love the Lord

and seek to serve Him, each according to his or her own understanding.

Our host told us about the activities of his church during the period of Communist repression. He described the various difficulties his church and its work were experiencing as they emerged from that period and sought to regain their former position in the life of the country and the hearts of the people. We introduced ourselves and our fundamental beliefs. We explained that we would soon be sending missionaries into his country and told him how they would perform their labors.

He asked, “Will your missionaries preach only to unbelievers, or will they also try to preach to believers?” We replied that our message was for everyone, believers as well as unbelievers. We gave two reasons for this answer—one a matter of principle and the other a matter of practicality. We told him that we preached to believers as well as unbelievers because our message, the restored gospel, makes an important addition to the knowledge, happiness, and peace of all mankind. As a matter of practicality, we preach to believers as well as unbelievers because we cannot tell the difference. I remember asking this distinguished leader, “When you stand before a congregation and look into the faces of the people, can you tell the difference between those who are real believers and those who are not?” He smiled wryly, and I sensed an admission that he had understood the point.

Through missionaries and members, the message of the restored gospel is going to all the world. To non-Christians, we witness of Christ and share the truths and ordinances of His restored gospel. To Christians we do the same. Even if a Christian has been “saved” in the familiar single sense discussed earlier, we teach that there remains more to be learned and more to be experienced. As President Hinckley recently said, “[We are] not argumentative. We do not debate. We, in effect, simply say to others, ‘Bring all the good that you have and let us see if we can add to it’ ” (“The BYU Experience,” BYU devotional address, 4 Nov. 1997).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offers all of the children of God the opportunity to learn the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored in these latter days. We offer everyone the privilege of receiving all of the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.

We invite all to hear this message, and we invite all who receive the confirming witness of the Spirit to heed it. These things are true, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Have you ever saved someone from a fire? Explain. Have you saved someone's life and never told anyone? Do you know anyone who sacrifice his life to save someone ? Have you ever had your life saved by someone? If so, how do you feel about the person who saved you? Have you ever been in a situation where you had to choose to end or endanger someone else's life to save your own? Have you ever been in a life or death situation and survived? Have you ever had to remove yourself from a situation? What happened that you knew you had to get away from it? Have you ever been in a survival situ "Have you been saved?" As an atheist, I'm never really quite sure how to respond to this. "From what?" is the answer that usually comes to mind. First of all, just listen to that phrase: Save the Earth. Who are we kidding? The Earth is an enormous mass of inorganic material eight thousand miles thick with just the thinnest margin of life clinging to its surface. It's a giant rock. It's been here for 5 billion years and it will be here another 5 billion years " whether we recycle those bottles or not. The Earth doesn't need our saving. It doesn't even know we exist. It's a rock! Far from saving it, we could do everything in our power to try to destroy it and 10 million years later, it would still be here, a big rock orbiting a much bigger