Plan of Salvation Overview


The essential components of the great plan of happiness, of redemption, of salvation, are these:

Premortal existence
   Spiritual [spirit] creation
   Agency [& free will]
War in heaven
Physical creation
The Fall and mortality
   Principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ (first principles: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, …)
The Atonement
Life beyond the grave
   Spirit world
Judgment
Resurrection

OPTIONAL READING ASSIGNMENT: Read Orson Pratt’s “Plan of Salvation” on the course Current Assignments page or from the “Documents List.”

READING ASSIGNMENT: Study D&C 20:17-34. Note: justification is forgiveness of our repented of sins by the grace of Christ, not ourselves (we become “unguilty”); and sanctification is purification from repented of sins and of the conditions of fallen mortality by the grace of Christ, not by ourselves. These are available to us because of Christ's Atonement (see below). Study

• Alma 18:24-39;
• Alma 22:7-14;
• Mormon 9:9-14
for further examples of God’s scriptural declaration of his plan of salvation, which is: (1) God; (2) Creation; (3) Fall; (4) Atonement—which is the plan of salvation from God’s perspective.

Premortal existence:
   God. There is an unchangeable God who is your Father. (See references under Assignment #1 above.) Who is He, really? A purpose of life is to find out—to come to know Him. Priesthood is the word which describes His power and authority (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 130; John Taylor, Gospel Kingdom, 129; Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, 136-200).

Spirit creation & agency: We were born as innocent, perfect female or male spirits of heavenly parents. Deformities and handicaps did not exist in our spirit birth, because we were born of perfect, resurrected parents. We started out equally at birth in the spirit world but changed through the use of free will and agency: Optional study: Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation 1:59; D&C 93:38; Alma 13:2-5.

Free will: the mental ability to make a choice.
Agency: the ability to carry out free will; to act.
Intelligence is the stuff of the spirit world just as matter is the stuff of the physical world. Maleness and femaleness existed in pre-existence. If you wish to read more on the subject for verification and clarification, see the following optional readings:
• Boyd K. Packer, General Conference address, Ensign Nov 1993, 21.
• Dallin H. Oaks, General Conference address, Ensign Nov 1993, 72.

“Every individual born on this earth comes into a lineage according to a pre-earth life determination.” (The Basic Doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ Essential to Developing a Religious Education Curriculum as Revealed to Ancient and Modern Prophets, approved by the Church Board of Education, March 5, 1971.) Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 365; Harold B. Lee, Ensign, January 1974, 4-5.

Definition of “intelligence”: “2. Intelligence, or light and truth, is also used as a synonym for spirit element.” (B. R. McConkie, “Intelligence,” Mormon Doctrine, 387.) See Preexistent First Estate on Documents List for further documentation about keeping the first estate, intelligence & intelligences (spirits); 2 Ne 2:13-16; Abr 3:22-23.


Physical creation:
A. Jesus Christ, under the direction of God the Father, created all things in a perfect, immortal, paradisiacal state: (2 Ne 2:22-25)
   1. No sin.
   2. No birth.
   3. No death
   4. No decay, corruption, etc.
Many who mortal mother), but Adam was also begotten physically by Heavenly Father into an immortal state (Moses 6:22).

Excerpts from “Origin of Man & Organic Evolution”:

1. The First Presidency (In Melvin A. and M. Garfield Cook, Science & Mormonism [SLC: Deseret Book Company, 1973], 156.) “In a letter to Samuel O. Bennion, February 26, 1912, Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund and Charles W. Penrose stated: ‘But President Young went on to show that our Father Adam—that is our earthly father—the progenitor of the race of man, stands at the head being ‘Michael the Archangel, the Ancient of Days,’ and that he was not fashioned from earth life and adobe but begotten by his Father in Heaven.”

2. George Q. Cannon. Millennial Star. 23:654, 12 October 1861. [Emphasis added.] He [Brigham Young] unmistakably declares man's origins to be altogether of a celestial character—that not only is his spirit of heavenly descent, but his bodily organization, too—that the latter is not taken from the lower animals, but from the original celestial body of the great Father of humanity.

3. Boyd K. Packer. “The Law and the Light.” Book of Mormon Symposium, BYU, 30 October 1988…. Many who perceive organic evolution to be law rather than theory do not realize they forsake the atonement in the process.... And, I am sorry to say, the so-called theistic evolution, the theory that God used an evolutionary process to prepare a physical body for the spirit of man, is equally false. I say I am sorry because I know it is a view commonly held by good and thoughtful people who search for an acceptable resolution to an apparent conflict between the theory of evolution and the doctrines of the gospel.... When the First Presidency speaks, we can safely accept their word.... Twice the First Presidency has declared the position of the Church on organic evolution. The first, a statement published in 1909 entitled The Origin of Man [the first article in the “Origin of Man & Organic Evolution” collection] was signed by Presidents Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund. (The Improvement Era, Nov. 1909:75-81.) The other, entitled “Mormon” View of Evolution, signed by Presidents Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, and Charles W. Nibley, was published in 1925 (The Improvement Era, Sept. 1925:1090-91). It follows very closely the first statement, indeed quotes directly from it. … I should take note of one letter signed by a president of the Church addressed to a private individual which includes a sentence, which taken out of context reads, “On the subject of organic evolution the Church has officially taken no position.” For some reason the addressee passed this letter about. For years it has appeared each time this subject is debated. Letters to individuals are not the channel for announcing the policy of the Church. For several important reasons, this letter itself is not a declaration of the position of the Church, as some have misinterpreted it to be. Do not anchor your position on this major issue to that one sentence! It is in conflict with the two official declarations, each signed by all members of the presidency.

4. Brigham Young. Journal of Discourses. 4:217-218. [Emphasis added.] Thus you may continue and trace the human family back to Adam and Eve, and ask, “are we of the same species with Adam and Eve?” Yes, every person acknowledges this; this comes within the scope of our understanding.

   But when we arrive at that point, a vail [sic] is dropped, and our knowledge is cut off. Were it not so, you could trace back your history to the Father of our spirits in the eternal world. He is a being of the species as ourselves; He lives as we do, except the difference that we are earthly, and He is heavenly. He has been earthly, and is of precisely the same species of being that we are....

   Things were first created spiritually; the Father actually begat the spirits, and they were brought forth and lived with Him. Then He commenced the work of creating earthly tabernacles, precisely as He had been created in this flesh Himself, by partaking of the coarse material that was organized and composed this earth, until His system was charged with it, consequently the tabernacles of His children were organized from the coarse materials of this earth.

   When the time came that His first-born, the Saviour, should come into the world and take a tabernacle, the Father came Himself and favoured that spirit with a tabernacle instead of letting any other man do it. The Saviour was begotten by the Father of His spirit, by the same Being who is the Father of our spirits, and that is all the organic difference between Jesus Christ and you and me.

5. Brigham Young. JD 7:285-286. … Here let me state to all philosophers of every class upon the earth, When you tell me that father Adam was made as we make adobes from the earth, you tell me what I deem an idle tale. When you tell me that the beasts of the field were produced in that manner, you are speaking idle words devoid of meaning. There is no such thing in all the eternities where the Gods dwell.

6. Brigham Young. JD 9:283. [Emphasis added.] Man is the offspring of God.... We are as much the children of this great Being as we are the children of our mortal progenitors. We are flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, and the same fluid that circulates in our bodies, called blood, once circulated in His veins as it does in ours. As the seeds of grains, vegetables and fruits produce their kind, so man is in the image of God.

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7. Brigham Young, JD 11:122. ... I believe that the declaration made in these two scriptures is literally true. God has made His children like Himself to stand erect, and has endowed them with intelligence and power and dominion over all His works and given them the same attributes which He Himself possesses. He created man, as we create our children; for there is no other process of creation in heaven, on the earth, in the earth, or under the earth, or in all the eternities, that is, that were, or that will ever be.

8. Brigham Young, JD 15:137. And when our spirits receive our bodies, and through our faithfulness we are worthy to be crowned, we will then receive authority to produce both spirit and body.

9. B. H. Roberts, Church News, 19 Sep 1936, 8. “Man has descended from God: in fact, he is of the same race as the Gods. His descent has not been from a lower form of life, but from the Highest Form of Life; in other words, man is, in the most literal sense, a child of God. This is not only true of the spirit of man, but of his body also. There never was a time, probably, in all the eternities of the past, when there was not men or children of God. This world is only one of many worlds which have been created by the Father through His Only Begotten.” (B. H. Roberts, “The Creation of Man,” Course of Study for Priests, 1910.)

10. Bruce R. McConkie, The Bible: A Sealed Book (CES Symposium publication, c. 1981), 1, 2, 6. [Emphasis added.] As of now, the world is not ready to receive these truths [from the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon]. For one thing, these added doctrines will completely destroy the whole theory of organic evolution as it is now almost universally taught in the halls of academia. For another, they will set forth an entirely different concept and timeframe of the creation, both of this earth and all forms of life and of the sidereal heavens themselves, than is postulated in all the theories of men. And sadly, there are those who, if forced to make a choice at this time, would select Darwin over Deity. . . .

   “The Origin of Man,” by the First Presidency of the Church. (See Clark, Messages of the First Presidency 4:200-206; see also 4:199.) This inspired writing sets forth the official position of the Church on the origin of man and therefore impinges on the evolutionary fantasies of biologists and their fellow travelers. As might be expected, it arouses great animosity among intellectuals whose testimonies are more ethereal than real...

11. Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, 380. We were his children first in the premortal life, and we are his children here again in this mortal sphere.

12. Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 198. [Emphasis added.] It is a decree of the Lord that every tree, plant, and herb bearing seed should bring forth of its kind, and cannot come forth except by any other law or principle.


The Fall & Mortality:

A. Through the use of agency, Adam and Eve, who were in a state of innocence, like little children who could not remember the pre-mortal existence, and who did not know good from evil, transgressed (they did not sin) the law of the limits of the Garden of Eden and caused a perfect universe to become imperfect. See Moses 3:16-17; 4:1-12; 2 Ne 2:10–19. By saying “I forbid it” God removed himself from any blame from causing the fall, even though he also said “Thou mayest choose for thyself, for it [the fruit of the tree or agency?] is given unto thee” (see Moses 3:17).

B. Birth, sin, change (corruption), and death entered the world. See 2 Ne 2:19-25; Moses 5:11.

1. Spiritual death means being cut off from God, being alienated from Him. When we reach the age of accountability and are not baptized it is as if we are no longer part of his family (hence the need to be “born again” into the family of God; see Mosi 27:24-31; Alma 7:14). We are all born “spiritually dead” into this world (Alma 42:7-11; Helaman 14:16). This does not mean we are born evil or wicked or have sinned; it simply means we inherit the conditions of the Fall in that we are cut off from His presence. See “Carnality” in Mormon Doctrine; see Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary 1:141; 2:422; Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report, Oct. 1899, 72. This being born spiritually dead includes little children; however, they are covered by the atonement, or “alive in Christ,” until they are age 8 (see 2 Ne 2:21; 9:7-9; Mosi 3:16, 19; Alma 34:9; 42:6-10; Ether 3:2; Moro 8:11-15, 19-23; D&C 29:41; 68:25, 27). Christ was the only one to be born spiritually alive, because God was the Father of his physical body. (“Son,” Mormon Doctrine, p. 740; Doctrines of Salvation 2:325–326.) Pres. James E. Faust, Ensign, Dec 2004, 6; Nov 2001, 19: “He [Jesus] was not subject to spiritual death.” Two major causes exist for our being spiritually dead:

   a. Caused by fall of Adam (effects everyone, even those under age 8; we are all born into this world spiritually dead). We inherit the effects and conditions of the Fall.

   b. Caused by our sins, transgressions, mistakes, ignorance, etc. Affects everyone who is accountable or past the age of 8 years.

2. Physical death: the physical body dies; it is no longer animated (alive).
3. There is no such thing as “spirit death”; spirits cannot die, having been born of immortal, perfect, resurrected parents; spirits are eternal. (Alma 42:9; 12:18.)

C. Purposes of mortality:
1. Obtain a physical body and be tested, tried, and proved by how we use it, treat it, take care of it.
2. Obtain experience and learning with truth and error and be tested, tried, and proved to see how we live.
3. Tutored to think like disciples of Christ, to be obedient, obtain the mind of Christ, and bring glory to God.
4. Be married in the temple and have children.
5. To give God and ourselves something to judge us by.

Principles & ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ: The plan of salvation from our perspective: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; repentance; baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; the laying of of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost; obedience; enduring to the end; temple rites and rituals.

The Atonement

A. Everyone, including mortal sons of Perdition, will be resurrected. (The 1/3 part who went with Satan will not be resurrected.)
B. Christ takes care of the spiritual death caused by Adam and all, both righteous and wicked will be brought back physically into the presence of God for judgment. (See Alma 11:40-41; 42:23, Helaman 14:15-17.)
C. Those who have obeyed the commandments and covenants will be made perfect and dwell in the highest glory of the celestial kingdom. The wicked remain as if no atonement had been made.
D. Justification: Not guilty anymore. Forgiven.
E. Sanctification: Cleansed, purified, made like unto God—partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).
F. Alma 7:11-13. The atonement not only can cover physical death and repentant sins and transgressions, but it also covers and will heal weaknesses, infirmities, sicknesses, etc.
G. Conditions if there were no atonement: 2 Ne 9:7-9—we would become devils. Latter-day Saints (living after the resurrection of Jesus Christ) may have the hazard of taking this aspect of the atonement for granted.

Life beyond the grave

Spirit World:

After death we go into the spirit world. Two major divisions of “mental states” exists there: paradise and outer darkness. (See Alma 40:12-14).

READING ASSIGNMENT:

A. Read in Mormon Doctrine by Bruce R. McConkie the topic “Second Chance Theory.” (Mormon Doctrine is like an encyclopedia: everything is listed in alphabetical order.) Click on title in the Internet version of the “Plan of Salvation Overview.”
C. Be able to answer: (1) What is the 2nd chance theory? (2) Why is it false? (3) Why can we not plan on putting off repentance in this life and doing it all in the spirit world?

Judgment

Final Judgment. This is like a college graduation—where the formal sentencing is carried out. There are no surprises — we will know what we deserve and what we are going to get. (See 2 Ne 9:22; Alma 33:22; 40:21; 3 Ne 27:14-15; D&C 88:18-38; 1 Cor 15:39-42.)

Resurrections:

A. First (before & during the Millennium, starting with Christ's; see 3 Ne 23:9-13; Matt 27:52-53):
   1. Celestial people (D&C 76:50-70, 92-96; 88:27-29, 96-98.)
   2. Terrestrial people (D&C 76:71-80; 88:30, 99.)
B. Second or last (after the Millennium):
   1. Celestial people (D&C 76:81-90, 98-112; 88:31, 100-101.)
   2. Those “filthy still” and the sons of perdition (D&C 76:30-49; 88:32, 102.) These suffer the 2nd spiritual death.