DO LATTER-DAY SAINTS BELIEVE JESUS AND SATAN ARE BROTHERS?

by Michael Hickenbotham

Before proceeding it should be made clear that those who ask this question out of the blue generally have a hidden agenda. I’m not talking about those who have heard it asked (or maybe read it) and now wonder how this can be. I’m talking about people who are committed to trying to put LDS teachings in the most unfavorable light possible and attempting to persuade others that Mormon doctrine is heretical and should be ignored by others. Those people already know the answer to this and other common anti-Mormon questions. Their real purpose is to shock those who have little or no understanding of the LDS concept of the plan of salvation and to convince those people that Latter-day Saints have a radical and blasphemous view of Christ. In their minds such views firmly establish us as a cult that believes in “another Jesus” and “another gospel.” By shocking in this way, they hope to prevent people from further investigating the truth of the LDS plan of salvation.

Why would anti-Mormons want to prevent people from hearing about the plan of salvation? One possible reason is that they are afraid that once people understand the plan fully, they will accept the enlightened truths it contains in preference to the traditional concepts taught by apostate Christianity. Anti-Mormons surely must realize that any knowledgeable student of LDS doctrine will not be shocked by questions about the relationship between Christ and Satan since they will know the truth: Mormons believe all of the spirits created by our Heavenly Father are brothers and sisters, including every human that has ever lived and every angel, whether good or bad. In order to explain this concept to those who are new to LDS beliefs, we must first lay some groundwork to better understand Christ’s relationship to his Father and to us and discover how Lucifer came to be Satan.

THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST

Latter-day Saints believe Jesus Christ holds a preeminent position among all pre-existent spirits. Paul indicates that He was called the “first begotten” by the Father and the angels of God were commanded to worship Him. Because Mormons believe that we are also spirit children of this same Heavenly Father, we believe Jesus may properly be referred to as our “spirit brother” or “elder brother.” Although the scriptures refer to Jesus Christ as the “firstborn among many brethren” and the “firstborn of every creature,” this idea is foreign to many Christians. They often try to rationalize these scriptures by arguing that Christ was the “firstfruits” of the resurrection and therefore was “firstborn” in that sense. This is also true, but a careful analysis of the scriptures noted above reveals that Jesus Christ’s pre-eminence as firstborn relates to His own pre-existence and that of man. Significantly, Revelation 3:14 affirms that Jesus Christ was “Amen the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” He was the first of all the spirit progeny of our Father in Heaven and thus our elder brother. When men follow him and become one with him, “he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

The concept that Christ’s spirit was organized by our Father in Heaven is difficult for many Christians to accept because they have been taught that Christ is eternal in the same sense as God the Father. At first glance the LDS doctrine seems to contradict that eternal nature. Modern scripture helps us understand this concept:

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or light of truth was not created or made neither indeed can be. For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fullness of joy.

In the Book of Abraham we are told:

If there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent that the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they ex-
isted before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal. And
the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelli-
gen than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all...

I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to declare unto thee the works which my hands
have made, wherein my wisdom excelleth them all, for I rule in the heavens above, and in the
earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from
the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen.

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the
world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw
these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will
make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good;
and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with
him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God
shall command them; And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who
keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their
first estate; and they who keep their second es-
estate shall have glory added upon their heads
for ever and ever.10

From these verses we learn that God organized all spir-
its from pre-existing intelligence. Among these spirits
that Abraham saw were the noble and great spirits.
These no doubt included the spirits of Christ and the
prophets plus many other righteous spirits of men who
have lived or will live on the Earth. The spirits of Luci-
fer and the angels that followed him were also num-
bered among these spirits. Because the intelligence from
which all spirits were organized was eternal, the spir-
ants themselves are also eternal. Therefore the spirits of
Christ and all men are eternal.

The Creation of Spirits and
the Council in Heaven

Modern scripture has also restored knowledge of the
spirit creation11 and what is referred to as the council
in heaven where our Heavenly Father laid out His plan
for this earthly existence.12 It also explains how Christ
affirmed His support for that plan and Lucifer proposed
an alternative plan that was ultimately rejected by the
Father and a majority of His spirit children. The mi-
nority that sided with Lucifer chose to follow him even
though it meant never receiving mortal bodies. John
the Revelator described the expulsion of Lucifer and
his followers from Heavenly Father’s presence as a war
in heaven:

And there was a war in heaven: and Michael
and his angels fought against the dragon; and
the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed
not; neither was their place found any more in
heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that
old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which
deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into
the earth, and his angels were cast out with
him.13

Verse 4 of the same chapter (Revelation 12) explains
“his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and
did cast them to the earth.” The inclusion of this de-
scription in John’s Revelation about the last days has
convinced some Christians that these events have not
yet taken place, but similar descriptions in Isaiah 14:10–
16 and especially 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6 confirm that
these events have already taken place. In fact they took
place before the foundation of the world14 when Christ
was chosen to be the redeemer of all mankind.15

God is the Father of Us All

Scripture also informs us that Christ consistently re-
ferred to God the Eternal Father as not only His own
Father but also as our Father.16 He taught all men to
approach God in prayer by saying “Our Father which
art in heaven”17 and after the resurrection He told Mary
Magdalene: “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father;
and to my God, and your God.”18 These verses and mod-
ern revelation19 affirm that the title Father is to be un-
derstood literally. The scriptures teach us that we all
have “one father” and “one God” who created us.20 That
Being is the Father of the spirits of all men,21 more com-
monly called our Heavenly Father.22
Latter-day Saint children learn about their relationship to their Father in Heaven from a young age by singing one of their favorite hymns entitled *I Am a Child of God*. The song teaches them that they are children of God, and He has sent them to Earth, and given them an earthly home with loving parents to help them learn through his word (the scriptures) how to return to Him.

The Apostle Paul taught this same truth declaring that all men, Christian and non-Christian alike, are the “offspring of God.” He further informed those he taught that God is the “Father of all” and the “Father of spirits.”

Though some have tried to rationalize Paul’s teaching by pointing out that those who are spiritually born again become sons and daughters of God, this in no way contradicts the fact that we all originated as spirit children of God. In the one sense, God is the creative Father of all our spirits, while in another sense He is the regenerative Father of those that learn to understand His word and do His will and are subsequently born again. A spiritual rebirth occurs when the Holy Spirit transforms us and our hearts are changed so that we have “no more disposition to do evil.” God commands us to become like Him so that we may be spiritually born again unto eternal life and thus become his sons and daughters eternally.

Moses applied a similar title to God, our Father. He described Him as the “God of the spirits of all flesh.” As such, He was the Father of all spirit beings in the pre-existence, including Jesus Christ and Lucifer, who later became Satan. These pre-existent spirit beings included the spirits of all those who have received physical bodies here upon the Earth as well as the spirits who have not yet come to the Earth and a great number of spirits who rebelled and followed Satan. Since this is not a familiar teaching to most Christians, a more detailed explanation might be helpful at this point.

**Pre-earth Events Understood by Early Christians**

Latter-day scripture greatly expands our understanding of the events that took place in heaven prior to man’s physical creation described in Genesis. Although these events are hinted at in the Bible, they are generally difficult to understand without additional help. Some Bible scholars have discovered that the earliest Christians understood these teachings about the pre-existence of man and shared this knowledge until it was condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D. Many early Christian writers such as Justin Martyr, Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem, Clement of Rome, Origen, Pierius, John of Jerusalem, Rufinus and Nemesius believed these doctrines.

The writer of Clementine Recognitions (sometimes referred to as Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions) affirmed this view teaching, “For this reason the world has existed through the ages, so that the spirits destined to come here might fulfill their number, and here make their choice between the upper and the lower worlds.”

This principle was also taught by Origen in 220 A.D. in his essay *On First Principles*. He there described an initial spiritual creation of Heaven and Earth and the spirits of all the later inhabitants of the physical creation. From this spiritual pre-existence, some were born into one of three different glories which Origen called “supercelestial, terrestrial, and subterrestrial.” Origen also informs us that the “primeval spirits” of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were created “before any other works of God.”

**Biblical Echoes of Pre-earth Life**

Although serious Bible scholars acknowledge that a belief in the pre-existence of man was a genuine Jewish and early Christian doctrine, only traces of this teaching are still found in our modern Bible. It is possible that because this doctrine was so widely accepted as genuine until the Council of Constantinople, both Old and New Testament writers as well as early Church theologians presupposed its veracity and acceptance by later readers.

Early examples of scriptural presupposition of man’s pre-existence are found in Job, Proverbs, Jeremiah, and Ecclesiastes. Job 15:7 refers to the pre-existence of Adam, who was “created before the hills” and an allusion to the pre-existent spirits of men is found in Job 38:4–7 when the “sons of God shouted for joy” at the creation of the Earth. Solomon declares that he “was set up from everlasting” and was “brought forth” even before the Lord “made the earth.” He also proclaims that when the Lord “prepared the heavens, I was there...by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” Jeremiah 1:5 similarly speaks of the pre-existence of the prophet whom God “knew” before being formed in...
his mother’s womb. Not only was he known, but he was “sanctified” and “ordained…a prophet unto the nations” as Christ was similarly ordained the Savior in the pre-existence. The preacher of Ecclesiastes likewise affirms that at death “the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Although modern orthodoxy has espoused the theory that most biblical allusions to the pre-existence of man are in reality examples of God’s foreknowledge, we should note that this explanation breaks down for all four of the scriptures cited above.

New Testament scriptures likewise allude indirectly to man’s pre-existence. This premise was, for example, the basis of the disciples’ question about the blind man: “Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” The man could only have sinned prior to his birth had he lived before birth. That sin prior to birth was considered possible is confirmed by Peter’s reference to the “angels that sinned” and Jude’s allusion to the same event.

Many of the scriptural references to the divine origin of our spirits just cited also support the idea that our spirits can, in reality, “return unto God,” the Father of all spirits. When we examine Paul’s references to God’s foreknowledge of those “called according to his purpose,” we find the same Greek word (proginosko) that is translated as “foreordained” in 1 Peter 1:20. Just as Christ was foreordained to his calling “before the foundation of the world,” so the saints seem also to have been foreordained “to be conformed to the image of his Son…the firstborn among many [spirit] brethren.” Paul, in his other epistles, confirms the fact that we were “chosen…in him before the foundation of the world” and were there (in heaven) given a “hope” of redemption “in the word of truth of the gospel.”

Although a statement in Zachariah 12:1 that God “formeth the spirit of man within him” appears to contradict the view that our spirits were created long before our bodies, the rest of the scriptures and Jewish and Christian writings affirm it. Josephus in his Wars of the Jews describes the Jewish Essenes’ belief that “bodies are corruptible, but that the souls are immortal, and continue forever; and that they come out of the most subtle air, and are united to their bodies as in prisons…but when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward.” A possible explanation for the statement in Zachariah 12:1 centers on the translation of the Hebrew word yatsar. Although most translators render it formeth or forms, it might also be translated as frames, meaning places within. Support for this is found in other Old Testament scriptures. When a careful study is made, it is clear that God places spirits into our earthly bodies of flesh.

**What the LDS Believe About Satan**

Latter-day Saints believe and teach that:

The name Lucifer…is a translation of the Hebrew Heylel ben Shakhar, which means “herald son of dawn” or “morning star.” In the premortal life, Lucifer was an angel having authority in the presence of God. He played a prominent role in the Council in Heaven. After the Father in Heaven offered the plan of righteousness to help His children become as He is, Lucifer countered with an alternative plan.

The Father’s plan was to save and exalt all of His obedient children. To be obedient, they must keep his commandments and do good. In the Father’s plan, it was foreknown that many would reject exaltation and therefore would receive lesser glories.

Lucifer’s plan proposed to “save” all of the Father’s children by forcing each to obey the Father’s law in all things. Lucifer desired that he be rewarded for this great feat of saving everyone by having the Father’s honor and glory given to him personally. Because mortals can be saved only in their own freely chosen repentance, Lucifer’s proposal was rejected. In the ensuing war in heaven, he gained the allegiance of a third of the Father’s spirit children. Lucifer and his followers were then cast out of heaven to earth, where he became Satan and they all became devils (Moses 4:1-3; D&C 29:36-37; 76:25-38).

John A. Tvedt, observed that this idea has parallels in ancient religious literature:

Lucifer was identified as a fallen angel in early Jewish and Christian lore. In *Enoch* 29:4–5, 23, one of the archangels wanted to place his throne higher than the clouds and to be equal to God in power, but was cast out with his angels and made to fly over the abyss. The story clearly parallels Isaiah 14:12–15, even in using the term “most High” for God. Similarly, in *Life of Adam and Eve* 15:15–16, we read that the devil was cast out of heaven because he sought to place his throne above the stars of heaven and become like the most High. For stars falling from heaven being the fallen angels, see 1
Origen taught that “before the aeons existed, all spirits were pure; demons, souls and angels alike, all served God and did what he commanded them. The devil was one of them. He had free-will and wanted to set himself up against God, but God cast him down. The biggest sinners became demons, lesser ones angels, the least archangels.”

**ANGELS AND MEN ARE OF THE SAME SPECIES**

Many Christians today are taught that angels are a separate species from the spirits of men. We should realize that the scriptures identify angels as ministering spirits. Psalms 104:4 rhetorically asks, “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire?” and Hebrews 1:13–14 reads, “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits; sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?” As has already been shown, we all existed as spirits before birth. And men, like angels, often act as messengers of God. That angels are in appearance as men and were actually called men by inspired writers is also attested to in scripture.

We are likewise instructed that we are not to worship angels. It is only when we read the account of an angel’s appearance to John the Revelator that this injunction is explained. John records, “And when…I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel…Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets.” The angel thus identifies himself as a righteous man who had returned as an angelic messenger even as Moses, Elias, and others have done. He was not just man’s equal, but a spirit brother and a son of God as man is.

Joseph Smith has also affirmed that angelic messengers can be either resurrected men or spirits who are not yet resurrected. Bruce R. McConkie makes it clear that all “angels of the Almighty are chosen from among his offspring and are themselves pressing forward along the course of progression and salvation…because angels are of the same race as man and God.”

Some Christians mistakenly conclude that angels are “sexless” based on a misinterpretation of Matthew 22:30. This scripture implies nothing about the ability of angels to procreate but only states that they are unmarried (single). Since marriage and procreation are only part of mortal life and exaltation, it seems clear that unexalted angels, whether pre-existent spirits or resurrected beings, will necessarily be single.

**THE CONTRAST BETWEEN SATAN AND JESUS**

Our critics often ask how Lucifer ever could have been a spirit brother of Jesus when their characters are diametrically opposite. We must first understand that the Bible tells us that Lucifer (meaning light-bearer in Latin or, in Hebrew, original shining one) was in the beginning a “son of the morning” and was perfect in all his ways from the day of his creation until iniquity was found in him. Thereafter, he aspired to “exalt” himself and become “like the most High.” Lucifer’s lust for power led to his downfall. Because of his rebellion against God he was cast out “as lightening” and “became Satan.”

We should note that Lucifer was not created as an evil being but became Satan by his own choice. It may seem ironic that Satan could be evil when Christ his brother was righteous, but we should remember that he was one among many who were spirit brothers. That some had a spirit of rebellion should come as no surprise. Isaiah 14:12–15 and Revelation 12:7–9 make it clear that it was so. We also find similar examples among other brothers in the scriptures: Cain and Abel, Joseph and his brothers, and Jacob and Esau. We should also note that even among the apostles chosen by Christ was found Judas Iscariot; a man who must have been, initially at least, worthy of that calling.

**CONCLUSION**

A former LDS prophet, President Joseph Fielding Smith, stated that, “We accept Jesus Christ as God—one Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh, and the first begotten in the Spirit. Therefore he is our eldest brother, for we also are the offspring of God.” When we understand this, we also gain a much deeper knowledge of our potential as sons and daughters of Deity. We find out that we are on an eternal journey during which we have unlimited potential to grow and progress and become like our Heavenly Father and our elder brother Jesus Christ. As God’s children we all are capable of growth beyond our wildest expectations if
we but pattern our lives after the Son’s as he patterned his life after the Father’s. Bible scriptures support this belief. The Bible teaches first and foremost that we are children of a loving God created in his image and likeness. It also teaches that man occupies a position of pre-eminence in God’s creation. Psalms 8:4–6 affirms that man was “made a little lower than the angels.” God commands men to be holy and perfect like Himself so that thereby they “might be partakers of the divine nature” and be spiritually reborn as His sons and daughters. The scriptures further affirm that the righteous at His coming, will not only inherit all things, but will be like the Lord and receive of his glory becoming one with both God and Christ.

Orthodox Christianity has long forgotten these glorious truths and has substituted a more modest and less inspiring future reward for those God saves—eternal servants in His heavenly realm. Latter-day Saints prefer the truth that the righteous will reign forever with Them upon Their throne as “kings and priests unto God and his Father.” Indeed, they affirm the promise of God that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

**FURTHER READING**


**NOTES**


2. For more information on the apostasy, see the FAIR paper entitled Were an Apostasy and Restoration Predicted?, available at www.fair-lds.org.

3. See Hebrews 1:6. A few verses later (Hebrews 1:8) Jesus was referred to as God and later became Jehovah, the God of Israel.

4. Romans 8:29.

5. Colossians 1:15. See also D&C 93:21–23.


16. Matthew 5:45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8, etc.


25. 1 John 3:2; 2 Corinthians 6:17–18; Revelation 21:7. See also the LDS Topical Guide (in the back of the LDS version of the Kings James Bible), page 306.

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cally identified as Solomon but it appears that these verses...Secondly, these proverbs are generally attributed to Solomon (Proverbs 8:22–31; Isaiah 14:10–16; Jeremiah 1:5; Acts 17:28–29; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6 and Revelation 12:4, 7–9.


35. Clementine Recognitions, www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-08/anf08-30.htm#LOC_P1293_307319, Oct 10, 2001) III.26, Patrologia Graec., I:1249 f. Although the document itself dates to the third or fourth century, scholars agree that it contains material which goes back to the second century, therefore giving us a glimpse of the early church.


40. Proverbs 8:23–26. Although these verses are metaphorically spoken by “wisdom...and understanding” (verses 1, 12, 14), these proverbs are generally attributed to Solomon (Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1). The writer of Proverbs 8 is not specifically identified as Solomon but it appears that these verses are about the pre-existent Solomon himself.” Solomon’s wisdom and knowledge were revered in scripture (1 Kings 4:29, 34; 5:12; 10:23, 24; 11:41, 2 Chronicles 1:11; 9:3, 22–23; Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31) and there is even an apocryphal writing entitled Wisdom of Solomon. It seems likely to this author that these verses were therefore speaking metaphorically about Solomon in the pre-existence.


42. 1 Peter 1:20.

43. Ecclesiastes 12:7. More will be said about this topic shortly.

44. John 9:2.


46. Ecclesiastes 12:7.


49. 1 Peter 1:19–20.

50. Romans 8:29; see also Alma 13:3–5.

51. Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9.

52. Colossians 1:5; Titus 1:2.


54. See Genesis 2:7 (note that breath and spirit are the same word in Hebrew); Job 32:8; Isaiah 42:5; Ezekiel 37:5–10.


58. See also Hebrews 1:7.

59. See Matthew 18:10. Note that angels in this verse should be translated as spirits.

60. Haggai 1:13; Malachi 2:7, 3:1; Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27.


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70. Isaiah 14:13–14.


77. Deuteronomy 14:1; Psalms 82:6; Hosea 1:10; Malachi 2:10; Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28–29; Romans 8:16; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 4:6.


79. The term angels should actually be translated gods because the word Eloheim was used in the Hebrew texts, and then translated as the Greek aggelos in the Septuagint. For further information, see Harold W. Attridge, Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1989), 71. See also Psalms 82:1, 6; 97:9.

80. Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48; Hebrews 12:10; 1 Peter 1:15; 2 Peter 1:3.

81. 2 Peter 1:4.


83. Revelation 21:7

84. 1 John 3:2–3; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:21.

85. 2 Thessalonians 2:14. See also Psalms 8:4–6; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Colossians 3:4; 2 Peter 1:3.

86. John 17:21–23, 1 John 1:3.


89. 1 Corinthians 2:9, Isaiah 64:4.

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