



When we understand the doctrine that death does not change us and that the spirit world is actually a continuation of our mortal probation, it becomes clear that death is just a doorway.

“Between the Time of Death and the Resurrection”: A Doctrinal Examination of the Spirit World

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All men know that they must die,” explained the Prophet Joseph Smith, “and it is . . . but reasonable to suppose that God would reveal something in reference to the matter.”¹

Many people wonder what happens to our spirits when we die, and there is “abundant speculation” on this subject.² But what do we really know about conditions in the spirit world? As President Dallin H. Oaks has reminded us, the answer is “not as much as we often think.”³ What we *do* know about the spirit world, we know by revelation not speculation. These doctrines are found in the scriptures and in the consistent teachings of modern prophets.⁴ Alma 40 is one of the primary scriptural texts for our doctrinal understanding of the “spirit world” or what Alma calls the “space between the time of death and the resurrection” (Alma 40:9). In this article, I use Alma 40 as the foundation to understand, synthesize, and summarize the main doctrines of the Church regarding the postmortal spirit world.⁵

Biblical Understanding

It is difficult to appreciate the doctrinal contribution of the Book of Mormon on our understanding of the plan of salvation without first becoming aware of what the Bible teaches and how other Christians have traditionally interpreted these teachings. It might surprise many members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to discover that the Bible teaches very little about the postmortal spirit world and what it does teach is often vague and subject to various interpretations. As a result, there are differing views among Christians about what happens when we die.

One biblical passage that informs the Latter-day Saint's understanding of the spirit world is found in Luke 23:43, wherein Christ memorably assured the thief on the cross that "to day shalt thou be with me in paradise." For Latter-day Saints, this is read as a reference to the postmortal spirit world where spirits who have died temporarily await the resurrection when they will be judged and consigned to a kingdom of glory.⁶ Joseph Smith even rephrased the verse while preaching on the subject to read "This day thou shalt be with me in the world of the spirits, then I will teach you."⁷

Prominent Christian evangelist Billy Graham, on the other hand, interpreted paradise in this passage to simply refer to heaven. According to Graham, Jesus is here assuring the thief of his immediate ("To day") and eternal place in heaven, based on his expression of faith in Christ.⁸ Graham's interpretation is illustrative of what many Christians assume will happen to all believers when they die; they will immediately enter the presence of God in heaven and there await an eventual bodily resurrection. Such a view leaves no room or need for a temporary postmortal spirit world.

In the writings of Peter, Latter-day Saints learn that one reason for a postmortal spirit world is to provide time for spirits to further prepare for the final judgment. In his first epistle, Peter declared that between his death and resurrection, Christ "went and preached to the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19). Elaborating on this point, Peter explained, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6). Beginning with the Prophet Joseph Smith, these verses have long been understood by Latter-day Saints to refer to Christ's inaugural preaching of the gospel in the spirit world.⁹ These passages even prompted President Joseph F. Smith to receive a vision on the subject.¹⁰

However, as scholar Terryl Givens has shown, traditional Christianity has not found consensus on how to interpret this statement from Peter.¹¹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ’s descent into hell” was that “Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there.”¹² On the other hand, Protestant reformer John Calvin, completely denied this interpretation of Christ preaching to disembodied spirits, calling it “nothing but a fable.”¹³

A final example is found in the book of Luke, where Jesus Christ described the faithful beggar “Lazarus,” who at death “was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). Meanwhile, the uncompassionate rich man is consigned at death to be “in hell . . . , being in torments” (Luke 16:23). After asking Abraham to send Lazarus to help ease his torment, the rich man is informed that “between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot” (Luke 16:26).

Reading through the lens of Alma 40, Latter-day Saints have interpreted “Abraham’s bosom” as a reference to postmortal spirit paradise, and hell as what we have come to call spirit prison. The “great gulf” between the two divisions of the spirit world has commonly been interpreted to mean that “there was no intermingling by the spirits in paradise and hell until after Christ bridged the ‘great gulf’ between these two spirit abodes.”¹⁴ While this description fits the doctrine taught in the Book of Mormon, it is not the traditional Christian interpretation.

One problem with interpreting this account is that it is difficult to determine whether it is just a parable to be read figuratively or whether it represents something more and should be interpreted literally. On this point, some traditional Christian teachings assume that it is a simple parable and that we should be cautious in inferring any doctrine about the afterlife from it. For example, Christian scholar N. T. Wright explained that it “doesn’t add anything new to the general folk belief about fortunes being reversed in a future life. If it’s a parable, that means once again that we should take it as picture language about something that was going on in Jesus’ work.”¹⁵

However, many aspects of this parable make it uncharacteristic of typical parables (including the proper name of Lazarus), which has led some to take a more literal approach to this account, using it to understand the condition of the spirit or soul after death.¹⁶ For example, Martin Luther explained

that hell (in this parable) cannot be the final or “true hell that will begin on the day of judgment” but must “be a place where the soul can be and has no peace, and it cannot be corporeal” (or physical), but it is where the “soul is buried and held until the day of judgment.”¹⁷ The possibility of a temporary spirit abode before judgment was elaborated on in the extrabiblical Catholic doctrine of purgatory,¹⁸ where unprepared souls await their potential future entrance into heaven.

As the above illustrations make clear, there is not a consensus in Christian teachings about what happens immediately after death. Vague verses and incomplete expressions in the Bible open the topic to various interpretations and speculations from immediate judgment and consignment to an eternal heaven or hell (at death), to a temporary abode in purgatory somewhere between heaven and hell. Fortunately for Latter-day Saints, the Book of Mormon and latter-day revelation¹⁹ reveal many plain and precious truths about the spirit world and other doctrines of the plan of salvation that can be used to interpret and understand what is unclear in the Bible.²⁰

“I Have Inquired Diligently of God That I Might Know”

The Prophet Joseph Smith lamented that “men of the present time testify of Heaven, and of Hell, and have never seen either and I will say that no man knows these things without [revelation].”²¹ One man that understood the need for revelation to know about life after death was the Book of Mormon prophet Alma. Alma knew from the scriptures (for example, Mosiah 15:20; 2 Nephi 9:12) that “there is no resurrection . . . until after the coming of Christ” (Alma 40:2), and he reasoned that “there must needs be a space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection” (40:6). Rather than being content with this limited information, he did what the prophets of the Book of Mormon often did, and what they consistently invite us to do: he inquired of the Lord and received revelation.²²

“I have inquired diligently of God that I might know” (40:3), Alma explained to his son Corianton. Specifically, he inquired, “What becometh of the souls²³ of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection?” (40:7). In response, the Lord gave Alma a revelation (“Behold, it has been made known unto me by an angel”; 40:11), and he then could teach with certainty and confidence on this subject (“This is the thing of which I do know”; Alma 40:9). His views were not the result of philosophical speculation or reasoning. This was not conjecture or hearsay but sure knowledge

based on direct and personal revelation. This is in dramatic contrast with many of the theories and ideas in the world regarding life after death.

It is because of his expert knowledge on this topic that Alma can “unfold . . . [this] mystery” (40:3). In scriptural terms, “mysteries of God are spiritual truths known only by revelation”²⁴ and include the doctrine of the spirit world. As Alma explained earlier in the Book of Mormon, “It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him” (12:9). Not only had the Lord privileged Alma with the knowledge of this “mystery” of life after death, but he also allowed Alma to impart it to his son Corianton and to record the teachings on the plates to preserve this doctrine for us. Therefore, it is as if he is addressing all of us who desire to know more about life after death when he tells his son, “Now, I unfold unto you a mystery” (40:3).

“Taken Home to That God Who Gave Them Life”

Alma begins his instruction by teaching “that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (40:11).²⁵ This expression by Alma could lead to the assumption that we immediately see God and are judged when we die. However, later in the sermon Alma clarified that it is not until the Resurrection that we are “brought to stand before God, and be judged” (40:21).²⁶ As a result, the prophetic interpretation of this verse is to infer that being “taken home . . . to God” simply refers to being received back into a spirit realm in the postmortal spirit world.²⁷

For example, President George Q. Cannon interpreted this verse to mean that Alma “has the idea, doubtless, in his mind that our God is omnipresent—not in His own personality but through his minister, the Holy Spirit. He does not intend to convey the idea that [spirits] are immediately ushered into the personal presence of God. He evidently uses that phrase in a qualified sense.”²⁸ Similarly, President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that this phrase “simply means that their mortal existence has come to an end, and they have returned to the world of the spirits.”²⁹ This was the same understanding of President Heber C. Kimball, who taught that “as for my going into the immediate presence of God when I die, I do not expect it, but I expect to go into

the world of the spirits and associate with my brethren, and preach the gospel in the spiritual world.”³⁰

As these examples illustrate, the prophetic interpretation of “taken home” is to read it in a loose sense to describe our return to a spirit existence in the postmortal spirit world and not immediately to the personal presence of God. Although it is common in obituaries and funerals to speak of loved ones already being in heaven with the Lord, these statements are best interpreted as a hope for the future reunion with God that will happen after the Resurrection. Until that time, all spirits go to the spirit world.³¹

It is also clear that “taken home” does not refer to a return to the premortal spirit realm where spirits await their mortal birth. As Alma explained, this spirit world is a place of waiting “between death and the resurrection” (40:11). This means that the way we enter this spirit world is through death and that the way we depart it is through the Resurrection. As a result, we would not expect to see premortal spirits who have not yet been born or angels who have already been resurrected in the postmortal spirit world. It is strictly the “world of the spirits of the dead” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:57), as President Joseph F. Smith described it in vision.³²

In addition, “taken home” seems to refer only to a return to a spiritual state, not to a dramatic change of location. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “the spirits of the just . . . are blessed in their departure to the world of Spirits. . . . They are not far from us, and know and understand our thoughts, feelings, and motions, and are often pained therewith.”³³ President Brigham Young was even more plain, teaching: “Where is the spirit world? It is right here. . . . Suppose the Lord should touch your eyes that you might see, could you see the spirits? Yes, as plainly as you see bodies.”³⁴ Thus, at death, spirits do not go to some distant place; they stay right here and simply pass through the veil to the spirit world on this earth. As President Ezra Taft Benson explained, “Sometimes the veil between this life and the life beyond becomes very thin. Our loved ones who have passed on are not far from us.”³⁵

“The Spirits of All Men, . . . Good or Evil”

Alma is clear that the spirit world is a place for “the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil” (Alma 40:11). Expounding on this point, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “Hades[,] the Greek, or [Sheol,] the Hebrew. These two significations mean a world of spirits. Hades, [Sheol], Paradise,³⁶ Spirits in prison,³⁷ are all one, it is a world of Spirits. The righteous and the wicked all

go to the same world of Spirits until the resurrection.”³⁸ Similarly, Brigham Young explained, “Do the good and evil spirits go together? Yes they do. Do they both inhabit one kingdom? Yes they do.”³⁹

Although the righteous and wicked all enter the same spirit world, the scriptures speak of a dichotomous division that exists there. Alma described the righteous being “received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise” (Alma 40:12) and the wicked being received into a “state of misery” (Alma 40:15). As used here, “state” seems to refer primarily to a condition or status of the soul—a spiritual “state” of being or mind that is designated at death and different for the righteous and the wicked. President Joseph F. Smith referred to this differentiation as a “partial judgment.”⁴⁰

This division appears as not only a difference in our “state” or condition but also an actual difference in our dwelling place⁴¹ within the spirit world. Alma taught that the wicked are “cast out into . . . darkness” (40:13), inferring that they reside apart from the righteous. This interpretation is supported by Doctrine and Covenants 138, where the spirits of the righteous at the time of Christ “were gathered together in one *place*” (v. 12; emphasis added), which the verse summary identifies as “paradise.”⁴² Furthermore, the revelation explains that “unto the wicked [Christ] did not *go*,” that “where these *were*, darkness reigned” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:20, 22; emphasis added). This language implies more than just a difference in experience between the righteous and the wicked, but an actual difference in location.

Confirming this interpretation, President Joseph Fielding Smith taught, “All spirits of men after death return to the spirit world. There, as I understand it, the righteous—meaning those who have been baptized and who have been faithful—are gathered in one part and all the others in another part of the spirit world. This seems to be true from the vision given to President Joseph F. Smith and found in [Doctrine and Covenants 138].”⁴³

In Restoration scripture, the place where the righteous dwell in the spirit world is consistently referred to as paradise,⁴⁴ while the place of the wicked is variably called hell,⁴⁵ outer darkness,⁴⁶ or prison.⁴⁷ In addition to referring to the place where disobedient spirits go, the term “hell” can also refer to the suffering and punishment experienced there in consequence of disobedience to God’s laws.⁴⁸ This suffering or hell is also called “spiritual death” (2 Nephi 9:12) and “eternal” or “endless torment” (Doctrine and Covenants 19:11–12).

What exactly separates these two groups is unclear. As explained above, some have interpreted the statement of Jesus Christ about the “great gulf

fixed” (Luke 16:26) to mean that there was an actual imposed separation so that “there was no intermingling by the spirits in paradise and hell until after Christ bridged the ‘great gulf’ between these two spirit abodes.”⁴⁹ It is also possible that this separation between the righteous and wicked is simply one of “self-selection,”⁵⁰ much like in this life, where the righteous choose to associate with the righteous while the wicked choose to gather with the wicked.

Whatever separation or barrier once existed, it has now been largely overcome through Jesus Christ. He bridged the gulf when “he organized his forces and appointed messengers” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:30) to preach the gospel as missionaries to those in spirit prison. Now there is an intermingling of spirits,⁵¹ as “faithful elders” and sisters who “depart from mortal life, continue their labors . . . among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:57; emphasis added). Spirits who once dwelt in paradise now appear to spend much of their time in prison as missionaries. Perhaps this current state in the spirit world was what the Prophet Joseph Smith was referring to when he taught that now paradise and spirit prison “are all one, it is a world of Spirits.”⁵²

This intermingling is how President Brigham Young described the present situation in the spirit world: “The prophet lays down his . . . life, and his spirit goes to the world of the spirits; the persecutor of the Prophet dies, and he goes to Hades; they both go to one place, and they are not to be separated. . . . The righteous and the wicked are together in Hades. If we go to [the United] States, we find there the righteous, and we find the wicked . . . all dwelling together; and when we go beyond this veil . . . we go where both saints and sinners go; they all go to one place.”⁵³ The association between the righteous and the wicked that exists here in this life now continues in the spirit world.

Because the spirits of the righteous and wicked now intermingle together, the importance of Alma’s emphasis on paradise and prison as “states” of happiness or misery (Alma 40:12, 14) becomes more pronounced. The state of mind or condition one experiences in the spirit world is not dependent on location. Righteous spirits from paradise do not suffer a state of misery when they enter prison and associate with those still in darkness. Rather, they “carry the light” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:30) with them. Their state of being continues regardless of their dwelling place.

“A State of Happiness, Which Is Called Paradise”

Alma taught that those who are received into paradise are “the spirits of those who are righteous” (Alma 40:12). Because the term “righteous” is sometimes ambiguous, Church teachings have clarified that paradise is “reserved for those who have been baptized and who have remained faithful.”⁵⁴ This interpretation is confirmed in Doctrine and Covenants 138, where those in paradise are referred to as “saints” (v. 23) and described as being “faithful in the testimony of Jesus,” having performed priesthood ordinances in mortality (illustrated by animal sacrifice) and having been persecuted for taking upon themselves “their Redeemer’s name” (vv. 12–13), presumably through baptism. It is also revealed that spirit prison includes all the unbaptized, because “vicarious baptism” is instrumental in releasing them (vv. 32–34).

These baptized and faithful saints in paradise “rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:12). This rest implies an end of earthly trials and Satan’s temptations. As President George Q. Cannon taught, “Satan is bound as soon as the faithful spirit leaves this tabernacle of clay and goes to the other side of the veil. That spirit is emancipated from the power and [bondage] and attacks of Satan.”⁵⁵ Because they have faithfully endured “until the end of the day of probation” (2 Nephi 33:9), they are guaranteed celestial salvation. President Joseph F. Smith referred to this when he said they rest “firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:14). A glorious resurrection is a “celestial resurrection.”⁵⁶ They can confidently rest in peace knowing that they will be saved in the celestial kingdom of God at the resurrection. This is what President M. Russell Ballard referred to when he taught that “life isn’t over for a Latter-day Saint until he or she is *safely dead*, with their testimony still burning brightly.”⁵⁷ Expounding on this comforting doctrine, Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught:

Everyone in the Church who is on the straight and narrow path, who is striving and struggling and desiring to do what is right, though is far from perfect in this life; if he passes out of this life while he’s on the straight and narrow, he’s going to go on to eternal reward in his Father’s kingdom. We don’t need to get a complex or get a feeling that you have to be perfect to be saved. You don’t. There’s only been one perfect person, and that’s the Lord Jesus. . . . I’m not saying that you don’t have to keep the commandments. I’m saying you don’t have to be perfect to be saved. If you did, no one would be saved. . . . What you have to do is stay in the mainstream of the Church and live as upright and decent people live in the Church—keeping the commandments, paying your tithing, serving in the organizations of the Church, loving the Lord, staying on the straight and narrow path. If you’re on that path when death comes—because this is the time and the day appointed, this the



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probationary estate—you'll never fall from it, and, for all practical purposes, your calling and election is made sure. Now, that isn't the definition of that term, but the end result will be the same."⁵⁸

Although those in paradise rest from temptation and trial knowing that they are “safely dead,” there is still much work to do in the next life. As used by Alma, the term “rest” must be qualified like the Sabbath day of “rest” for a

bishop. President Joseph F. Smith saw in vision that one great work that those in paradise are involved in is the “preaching of the gospel . . . among those who are in darkness.”⁵⁹ This work appears to be almost all-consuming.

President Wilford Woodruff explained the urgency of this work when he shared the following experience:

The last time I saw [Joseph Smith] was in [a vision of paradise]. He came and spoke to me. He said that he could not stop to talk to me because he was in a hurry. The next man I met was Father Smith; he couldn't talk to me because he was in a hurry. I met a half a dozen brethren who held high positions on earth, and none of them could stop to talk with because they were in a hurry. . . . By and by I saw the Prophet again, and I got the privilege to ask him a question. “Now,” said I, “I want to know why you are in a hurry? I have been in a hurry all my life, but I expected my hurry would be over when I got into [paradise], if I ever did.” Joseph said, “I will tell you, Brother Woodruff, every dispensation . . . has had a certain amount of work to do to prepare to go to the earth with the Savior when He goes to reign on earth. Each dispensation has had ample time to do this work. We have not. We are the last dispensation and so much work has to be done and we need to be in a hurry in order to accomplish it.”⁶⁰

President Russell M. Nelson shared a similar experience from the life of his grandfather whose own father visited from the spirit world. President Nelson's grandfather recorded:

I was in bed when Father [who had recently died] entered the room. He came and sat on the side of the bed. He said, “Well, my son, as I had a few spare minutes I received permission to come and see you for a few minutes. I am feeling well, my son, and have had very much to do since I died.”

“What have you been doing since you died, Father?”

“I've been traveling together with Apostle Erastus Snow ever since I died. That is, since three days after I died. I received my commission to preach the gospel. You cannot imagine, my son, how many spirits there are in the spirit world that have not yet received the gospel. But many are receiving it, and a great work is being accomplished. Many are anxiously looking forth to their friends who are still living to administer for them in the temples. I've been very busy preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

“Father, can you see us at all times, and do you know what we're doing?”

“Oh, no, my son. I have something else to do. I cannot go when and where I please. There is just as much and much more order here in the spirit world than in the other world. I have been assigned work to do, and it must be performed.” . . .

“Father, is it natural to die?”

“It is just as natural to die as it is to be born, or for you to pass out of that door.” And here he pointed at the door. “When I told the folks that I could not last long, it turned dark and I could not see anything for a few minutes. Then the first thing I could see was a number of spirits in the spirit world.”⁶¹

It is comforting to know that our faithful loved ones who die “continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:57). They are called to serve as missionaries to labor alongside us on the other side of the veil.

Another work those in paradise are involved with is the further personal development and learning required for their eventual exaltation. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, “It will be a great while after you have passed through the vail before you will have learned [the principles of exaltation]. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.”⁶² President Boyd K. Packer described this time in paradise as a “refining process” and explained that “when the refining process is complete, I know something of how [a faithful Latter-day Saint] will appear. He will be glorious!”⁶³

In addition to “a state of rest,” paradise is described by Alma as “a state of happiness” (Alma 40:12). Commenting on this, Elder Robert D. Hales explained: “I testify of the extraordinary peace and tranquility that await those beyond the veil who have followed the light and knowledge they have received in this life. If we could experience, only momentarily, the scene that awaits the righteous there, we would find it difficult to return to mortality. I know this from experience.”⁶⁴

Although the spirits of the faithful are in a state of happiness, we learn from additional revelation that they cannot “receive a fulness of joy” until they are reunited with their bodies in the Resurrection (Doctrine and Covenants 138:17).⁶⁵ Until then they wait for “their deliverance from the chains of death” (v. 18), looking “upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (v. 50). Thus, even paradise, in one sense, is still a prison that they wait to be released from by the power of the Resurrection (v. 51). This was what Elder McConkie was referring to when he taught that “the whole spirit world, and not only that portion designated as hell, is considered to be a spirit prison.”⁶⁶

What form of ecclesiastical organization exists in the spirit world is not completely clear from the scriptures, although the description of “faithful elders . . . continu[ing] their labors” (v. 57) does seem to imply some form of Church structure or priesthood order. President Woodruff taught: “The same priesthood exists on the other side of the veil. Every man who is faithful is in his quorum there. When a man dies and his body is laid in the tomb, he does not lose his [office]. . . . Every apostle, every seventy, every elder, etc., who has

died in the faith, as soon as he passes to the other side of the veil, enters into the work of the ministry, and there is a thousand times more to preach there than there is here.”⁶⁷

In addition to some form of ecclesiastical structure (especially to organize missionary work), there will also be families gathered together in spirit paradise.⁶⁸ As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “When we depart, we shall hail our mothers, fathers, friends, and all whom we love, who have fallen asleep in Jesus.”⁶⁹ Family organization even appears to be part of the structure or government in paradise.⁷⁰ At President Jedidiah Grant’s funeral, President Heber C. Kimball remarked: “[Brother Grant] said to me, ‘brother Heber, I have been into the spirit world two nights in succession, and . . . O, says he, the order and government that were there! When in the spirit world, I saw the order of righteous men and women; beheld them organized in their several grades. . . . He said that the people he saw there were organized in family capacities; and when he looked at them he saw grade after grade, and all were organized and in perfect harmony.”⁷¹

“The State of the Souls of the Wicked”

Alma explained that “the spirits of the wicked . . . shall be cast out into outer darkness. . . . Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness . . . until the time of their resurrection” (Alma 40:13–14). President Joseph F. Smith gave a similar description: “Where [the wicked] were, darkness reigned” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:22). As used in these verses, the term “darkness” or “outer darkness” refers specifically to spirit prison, the temporary place of “wicked” spirits who are awaiting the resurrection. Although it has become common for latter-day Saints to use “outer darkness” as a description of the permanent place where sons⁷² of perdition dwell after the Resurrection, the scriptures do not use this term in that way. The term “hell” is used in scripture to describe both the temporary abode (and suffering) in the spirit world for disobedient spirits⁷³ and the permanent location of the unredeemed followers of perdition.⁷⁴

Another term that requires definition is the term “wicked,” which in scriptural language is often a synonym for “unrepentant” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:20). Although we typically think of “wicked” as describing terrible people who have committed serious crimes, in the scriptures people are wicked if they are merely still in their sins. All of us sin, and without Jesus Christ we are all “wicked.” Thus, spirit prison is for those who have not yet

had their sins washed away by Christ through repentance and baptism (see vv. 32–34).

As President Joseph F. Smith explained, the wicked in spirit prison are “those who had died in their sins,” and they fall into two main groups: first, those who died “without a knowledge of the truth” and second, those who died “in transgression, having rejected the prophets” (v. 32). As a result, spirit prison will include a wide variety of people, from the worst criminals to the most honorable people. This number will even include those who will eventually inherit the celestial kingdom but who died without a knowledge of the gospel or an opportunity to be baptized (see Doctrine and Covenants 137:5–8).

Unlike the righteous spirits in paradise, those in spirit prison are still on probation and can be tempted and tried by Satan, who Alma teaches has power and influence in spirit prison just as he does here on earth.⁷⁵ President Woodruff confirmed this when he taught that “Satan has no power in the spirit world over those who have overcome him in the flesh, but he will have over those who have served him all their lives in this world.”⁷⁶

What those in spirit prison experience is described by Alma as “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” which he explains is “because of their own iniquity” (Alma 40:13). The Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin explained that guilt and remorse for sin are a main cause of this suffering. He taught that after death, “the demands of divine justice [will] awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, . . . which is *like* an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever” (Mosiah 2:38; emphasis added). Clearly, the suffering in spirit prison is not literally caused by fire and brimstone, but the spiritual remorse they feel is “*as* a lake of fire and brimstone” (2 Nephi 9:16; emphasis added).

A powerful illustration of this spiritual suffering is found in Alma the Younger’s experience after being rebuked by an angel. He explained that he was “racked with eternal torment” and “did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell, . . . even with the pains of a damned soul” (Alma 36:12–13, 16).⁷⁷ This account shows that “they are their own accusers.”⁷⁸ As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “A man is his own tormentor, and his own condemner; hence the saying, they shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone. I say, so is the torment of man.”⁷⁹

This description of spiritual suffering may cause concern, especially when we recognize that spirit prison includes future inhabitants of the celestial kingdom. It is important to recognize though that the suffering experienced in spirit prison is not uniform and universal. Additional revelation distinguishes between “the spirits of men kept in prison” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:73), who will ultimately inherit the terrestrial kingdom, and those who are “thrust down to hell” (v. 84), where they “suffer the wrath of Almighty God” (v. 106) until they eventually “bow the knee” to Christ and are released into the celestial kingdom (v. 110). This distinction is important because it implies that not everyone in spirit prison experiences the same degree of suffering. Those who have committed serious sins and choose not to repent will experience severe suffering in spirit prison, where “they shall be in torment” (Moses 7:39; see Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–20), whereas those who were honorable in mortality or ignorant of God’s laws are not described as having to suffer these same consequences (see Doctrine and Covenants 76:72–75). Instead, the consequences they will face are described in scripture as being “tolerable” (Doctrine and Covenants 75:22; 45:54; Matthew 11:22). Perhaps this difference in degree of suffering based on the degree of sin is implied when Alma describes this punishment as being “*because of their own iniquity*” (Alma 40:13; emphasis added).

Fortunately, there is a way to be released from sin and its resultant suffering. President Joseph F. Smith learned in vision that “chosen messengers” from paradise “proclaim liberty to the captives who were bound, even unto all who would repent of their sins and receive the gospel” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:31). Because repentance releases these “captives,” it is clear that the prison state they are in is primarily “the bondage of sin” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:57). Through repentance and vicarious baptism, they receive a remission of sins (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:33) and are therefore released from this spiritual prison. As the Prophet Joseph Smith explained, “As soon as the Law of the Gospel is obeyed here by their friends, who act as proxy for them, the Lord has administrators there, to set them free.”⁸⁰ After spirits in prison have received the gospel message from spirit world missionaries and have received baptism vicariously in the temple, they are “delivered from the prison house in the spirit world.”⁸¹

However, just because there is a provision for repentance in the spirit world does not mean that everyone will immediately choose to repent when they die. The Book of Mormon prophet Amulek taught, “When ye are

brought to that awful crisis [of death], . . . that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in the eternal world” (Alma 34:34). The spirit that Amulek is specifically referring to is the Spirit of the Lord or the spirit of the devil, which he makes clear in the next verse.⁸² Whichever of these contrasting spirits possesses us when we die, that “same spirit” will possess us in the next life. This is because our own spirit continues to be the “same spirit.” As stated in *Preach My Gospel*, “Death does not change our personality or our desires for good or evil.”⁸³ We maintain the same character, the same attitudes, and the same beliefs after death (see Alma 41:3–4). In other words, to apply Amulek’s teachings, because we ourselves have the “same spirit,” we continue to experience the same spiritual influences we cultivated in mortality.

Because we continue with the same “spirit,” attitudes, and beliefs when we die, we can expect that there will be a great diversity of spirits in prison with a wide variety of philosophies and religious views. Missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will not be the only teachers there, and it will take faith and discernment to receive the gospel there just as it does here. In this way, the spirit world is an extension of our mortal probation. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained, “We tend to overlook the reality that the spirit world . . . [is] part, really, of the second estate. The work of the Lord, so far as the second estate is concerned, is completed before the Judgment and the Resurrection. . . . [God] provides in the spirit world a continuum of mortality’s probation, the great opportunity for all.”⁸⁴

When we understand the doctrine that death does not change us and that the spirit world is actually a continuation of our mortal probation, it becomes clear that death is just a doorway.⁸⁵ It is a transition into a new life as a spirit. Although we lose our bodies, nothing fundamentally changes about who we are when we die. As a result, we should not assume that everyone automatically and immediately decides to repent and join the Church the moment they die. Although people can still change in the spirit world, we would expect that change of heart to take some time there, just as it typically does here.⁸⁶

Elder Melvin J. Ballard explained, “Do not let any of us imagine that we can go down to the grave not having overcome the corruptions of the flesh and then lose in the grave all our sins and evil tendencies. They will be with us. They will be with the spirit when separated from the body. . . . Every man and woman who is putting off until the next life the task of correcting and

overcoming the weakness of the flesh are sentencing themselves to years of bondage, for no man or woman will come forth in the resurrection until he has completed his work.”⁸⁷

Eventually, many people will receive the gospel in the spirit world. This appears to be especially true of our own ancestors. President Woodruff taught that “there will be very few, if any, [of your ancestors] who will not accept the gospel. . . . The fathers [and mothers] of this people will embrace the Gospel.”⁸⁸ President Lorenzo Snow agreed, explaining that “the great bulk of those who are in the spirit world for whom the work has been done will receive the truth. The conditions for the spirits of the dead receiving the testimony of Jesus in the spirit world are a thousand times more favorable than they are here in this life.”⁸⁹

Unfortunately, this hopeful doctrine of salvation for the dead has led to some misunderstandings. Some assume from this that they can deliberately reject the gospel in mortality and then receive it in the spirit world and still go on to a celestial reward. Addressing this idea, President Nelson taught, “Thankfully, I am not [their] judge. But I do question the efficacy of proxy temple work for a [person] who had the opportunity to be baptized in this life . . . but who made the conscious decision to reject that course.”⁹⁰ President Oaks has also expressed concern, explaining that “this mortal life is the time to [repent]. Although we are taught that some repentance can occur in the spirit world (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:31, 33, 58), that is not as certain.”⁹¹

Consistent with many other prophets and apostles, President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that the terrestrial kingdom will include “those who refused to receive the gospel when they lived on the earth, but in the spirit world accepted the testimony of Jesus [Doctrine and Covenants 76:73–74].”⁹² The scriptures are clear that all “who repent [in the spirit world] will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,” and they will be “heirs of salvation” in a degree of glory (Doctrine and Covenants 138:58–59), but whether they receive a celestial glory will be determined by God “according to their works” (v. 59).

Summarizing this doctrine, the topic of “hell” on the official website of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints states, “Spirit prison is a temporary state in which spirits will be taught the gospel and have the opportunity to repent and accept ordinances of salvation that are performed for them in temples (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:30–35). Those who

accept the gospel may dwell in paradise until the Resurrection. After they are resurrected and judged, they will receive the degree of glory of which they are worthy. Those who choose not to repent but who are not sons of perdition will remain in spirit prison until the end of the Millennium, when they are freed from hell and punishment and be resurrected to a telestial glory.”⁹³ Eventually, all will be released from “hell . . . by the power of the resurrection” (2 Nephi 9:12). Thus, gratefully, “hell has an end.”⁹⁴

Conclusion: “This Much I Say”

Alma concluded his instruction on the spirit world by admitting that he did not know everything about life after death. On some things, Alma is willing to offer his “opinion” (Alma 40:20), and on others he simply does “not say” (v. 21). Like Alma, we recognize that there is still much to learn about the next life and that the Lord does not reveal it all to us now. We must walk by faith. For all questions about the Spirit world not answered by our revealed doctrine, President Oaks offered the following counsel: “I suggest two answers. *First*, remember that God loves His children and will surely do what is best for each of us. *Second*, remember this familiar Bible teaching, which has been most helpful to me on a multitude of unanswered questions: ‘Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths’ (Proverbs 3:5–6).”⁹⁵

Although we do not know everything about life after death, there are some things of which we can be quite certain. As Alma concluded: “But, this much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works” (v. 21). This, Alma taught, “is the thing of which I do know” (v. 9). We can be confident therefore, that when we die we will find the spirit world just as Alma and his fellow prophets have described it. **RE**

Notes

1. History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], 1750, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/122>.

2. Dallin H. Oaks, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 2019, 27.

3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 2019, quoting “What’s on the Other Side? A Conversation with Brent L. Top on the Spirit World” (interview by R. Devan Jensen), *Religious Educator* 4, no. 2 (2013): 48.
4. President Dallin H. Oaks has cautioned us that near-death experiences and opinions of individuals do not constitute official doctrine of the Church on the spirit world. Instead, we should seek for official doctrine in “the prophetic teachings of the Presidents of the Church, affirmed by other prophets and apostles.” See Oaks, “Trust in the Lord,” 28. My article strives to do that.
5. For books that review these doctrines, see Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *The Life Beyond* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986); and Brent L. Top, *What’s on the Other Side?* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012).
6. For example, see Luke 24:43 footnote *a* in the Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible, which leads the reader to “Alma 40:21 (11–14, 21)” and to the Topical Guide topics of “Paradise” and “Spirits, disembodied.”
7. History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], 1573, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/218>.
8. See Billy Graham, “Answers,” Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, billygraham.org/answer/jesus-told-the-thief-on-the-cross-he-would-be-with-him-in-paradise-is-paradise-the-same-thing-as-heaven/.
9. See History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], 1573; *Times and Seasons*, 15 April 1842, 760; see also Moses 7:39.
10. Joseph F. Smith’s vision, which revealed that Christ did not go in person to the wicked (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:20), does not contradict Peter’s teaching that Jesus Christ preached to the spirits in prison. This is because (1) he sent messenger’s in his name to preach for him among the wicked in prison (v. 30) and (2) because the whole spirit world, including paradise where he taught the righteous (vv. 12–19), can be considered a spirit prison (v. 50). This is explained later in this article.
11. For review, see Terryl Givens, *Wrestling the Angel* (New York: Oxford, 2015), 248–50.
12. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1994), part 1, article 5, paragraph 1, p. 164.
13. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:442.
14. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1976), 1:521–22.
15. N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2001), 201.
16. This paper will use the terms “spirit” and “soul” interchangeably, as it is used in Alma 40.
17. John Nicholas Lenker, ed., *The Sermons of Martin Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 27.
18. J. F. X. Cevetello, “Purgatory,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, DC: McGraw-Hill), 11:1034.
19. See especially Doctrine and Covenants 138.
20. See Bruce R. McConkie, “The Bible, a Sealed Book,” *Teaching Seminary: Preservice Readings* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 123–32.

21. History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842], 12, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/547>.
22. See Terry Givens, “The Book of Mormon and Dialogic Revelation,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 2 (2001): 16–27, 69–70.
23. In Alma 40, “soul” means a spirit person that is awaiting resurrection to “be restored to the body” (v. 23). This is a different use of the term than in Doctrine and Covenants 88:15, where “soul” means a united spirit and body.
24. “Mysteries of God,” Guide to the Scriptures, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/scriptures/gs/mysteries-of-god>.
25. The phrase “taken home to . . . God,” mirrors a passage in Ecclesiastes, which states that at death “the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7; see Alma 40:11, note *d*). Alma (or the angel who instructed him) may be paraphrasing this verse.
26. This is frequent doctrine of the Book of Mormon. For example, see Alma 11:41–44 and Moroni 10:34.
27. See Clyde J. Williams, ed., *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 58.
28. Jerred L. Newquist, comp., *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 1:73.
29. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 2:85.
30. Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 3:112–13.
31. Although Christ visited the spirit world between his death and Resurrection (see Doctrine and Covenants 138), he no longer dwells there but has ascended up to heaven to dwell in the celestial presence of God as a resurrected being.
32. At the end of Joseph F. Smith’s vision, he sees Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other “faithful elders” in the spirit world (Doctrine and Covenants 138:53–57), but this is not meant to suggest that these elders were in the spirit world at the time Christ visited before they were born. At this point in his vision, he is clearly seeing a vision of the spirit world as it looked in 1918 when he received it and he used this information to explain that “faithful elders . . . when they depart mortal life, continue . . . preaching the gospel . . . in the great world of the spirits of the dead” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:57; emphasis added).
33. History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], 1751, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/123>.
34. John A. Widtsoe, comp., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 376–77.
35. Ezra Taft Benson, “Life Is Eternal,” *Ensign*, June 1971, 33; see also *Gospel Doctrine: Sermons and Writings of President Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1959), 430–31.
36. As used in Luke 23:43.
37. As used in 1 Peter 3:19.
38. History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], 1574, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/219>.
39. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 376.

40. *Gospel Doctrine*, 448.
41. The term “state” can refer to a condition and also to a place, as in the *state* of Texas. Alma’s teaching that paradise is a state does not mean it is not also a place.
42. Doctrine and Covenants 138, verse summary of 11–24.
43. Joseph F. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 2:230.
44. See 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 40:12; 4 Nephi 1:14; Moroni 10:34.
45. See 2 Nephi 9:12.
46. See Alma 40:13.
47. See Moses 7:38, 57. This article will use the term “spirit prison” to refer to that specific part of the spirit world where the “wicked” are gathered. It should be noted however, that the whole spirit world might also be considered a spirit prison, as shown in Doctrine and Covenants 138:50 and explained later in this article.
48. For example, see Alma 36:13; Doctrine and Covenants 76:84.
49. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1976), 1:521–22.
50. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 247.
51. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:521–22.
52. History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], 1574, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/219>.
53. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 377.
54. “Paradise,” in *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 111; see also Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:230.
55. Newquist, *Gospel Truth*, 61.
56. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Atonement and the Resurrection,” in *By Study and by Faith: Selections from the Religious Educator*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 17.
57. As quoted by F. Burton Howard, *Ensign*, May 1996, 28; emphasis added. See also M. Russell Ballard, “Keep the Commandments—Beginning Right Now!” (BYU devotional, 6 September 1987).
58. “The Probationary Test of Mortality” (address delivered at the Salt Lake City University Institute of Religion, 10 January 1982).
59. Doctrine and Covenants 138:57.
60. G. Homer Durham, comp., *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), 288–89.
61. Russel M. Nelson and Wendy Nelson, “RootsTech Family Discover Day—Opening Session 2017,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/family-history/video/opening-session-2017?lang=eng>.
62. History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], 1971, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/343>.
63. Boyd K. Packer, *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 266.
64. Robert D. Hales, *Return: Four Phases of Our Mortal Journey Home* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 404.
65. See also Doctrine and Covenants 93:33.

66. Bruce R. McConkie, “A New Commandment: Save Thyself and Thy Kindred!” *Ensign*, August 1976, 11. Similarly, President Dallin H. Oaks taught that “All in the spirit world are in some form of bondage.” Dallin H. Oaks, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 2019, .
67. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 22:333–34.
68. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 2019, .
69. *Teachings of the President of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 175.
70. It may be that paradise is organized like the celestial kingdom with the patriarchal order of family government where fathers and mothers preside over their children through temple covenants and sealings. See Ezra Taft Benson, “What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” *Ensign*, August 1985, 6.
71. Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:135–37.
72. Doctrine and Covenants 132:26–27 seems to imply that women can also commit the unpardonable sin and become daughters of perdition.
73. See 2 Nephi 9:12–13 and Bible Dictionary, “Hell.”
74. Doctrine and Covenants 29:38; see Bible Dictionary, “Hell.”
75. See Alma 40:13; Alma 34:34–35.
76. Mathias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 415.
77. See also Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–20.
78. History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], 1574, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/219>; emphasis added.
79. History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], 1976, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/348>.
80. “Discourse, 12 May 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock,” [2], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-may-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/2>.
81. Cache Stake Conference, Logan, Utah, 1 November 1891, in Official Declaration 1, “Excerpts from Three Addresses by President Wilford Woodruff regarding the Manifesto.”
82. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Cleansed by Repentance,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 94.
83. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 53.
84. Neal A. Maxwell, *The Promise of Discipleship* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 111.
85. Russell M. Nelson, “The Doors of Death,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 72.
86. Perhaps this is one reason for the policy of a one-year waiting period to perform vicarious ordinances for those who die.
87. Melvin J. Ballard, *The Three Degrees of Glory* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 13–15. See also, Dallin H. Oaks, “Cleansed by Repentance,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 94.
88. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 191.
89. Lorenzo Snow, *Millennial Star*, 6 October 1893, 718.
90. Russell M. Nelson, “Come Follow Me,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 91.

91. Dallin H. Oaks, “Cleansed by Repentance,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 94. On another occasion he taught, “Although we are urged not to procrastinate our repentance during mortality (see Alma 13:27), we are taught that some repentance is possible there (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:57).” Dallin H. Oaks, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 2019, 26.

92. Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:209. See also *True to the Faith*, 94; McConkie, “A New Commandment,” 9; Ballard, *Three Degrees of Glory*; Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps, “A Vision,” *Times and Seasons*, (day month year), 4:82–85; Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 249; *Doctrines of the Gospel: Student Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 90, 92.

93. “Hell,” Gospel Topics, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/hell?lang=eng&_r=1. Similarly, President Dallin H. Oaks has taught, “After suffering and repenting for violations of laws we have been taught, we are all destined for a kingdom of glory. The ultimate and final judgment will be by the Lord, who alone has the required knowledge, wisdom, and grace to judge each of us.” Dallin H. Oaks, “Two Great Commandments,” *Ensign*, November 2019, 75.

94. “Hell,” Guide to the Scriptures, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/scriptures/gs/hell>. Only those who become sons or daughters of perdition will suffer in hell in eternity. All the rest will be saved from hell in a degree of glory (Doctrine and Covenants 76:43–44).

95. Oaks, “Trust in the Lord,” 28.