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Throughout the ages, countless people have asked the question posed by Job: “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). To shout “Yes!” in answer to such a question is the great privilege of those with a testimony of Jesus Christ and His Resurrection.

Yet many around us are passing through this life “without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12) and must navigate between various facts and beliefs regarding death. For one, there’s the evidence of their eyes, or the “harsh reality” that death is universal and absolute—they’ve never seen anyone come back. Then there are the widespread reports of near-death experiences, with remarkable consistencies between them. And then there is the fact that human cultures all over the world have always had a concept of some sort of after-life, another consistency that begs an explanation.

But the assurance that our lives don’t end at death comes from God, who has revealed it from the beginning through numerous witnesses, including prophets, apostles, and, most important, the Holy Ghost.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT Life after Death?



*“If a man die,
shall he live
again?” Yes!
But then what?*

From the Beginning

The plan of salvation was first taught on this earth to Adam and Eve, our first parents. They learned about the gospel of Jesus Christ and how to return to Heavenly Father’s presence—and they understood that *returning* meant that we had been with Him before. So, from the beginning, Adam and Eve knew very clearly that this life isn’t all there is. They knew—and taught their children—that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, they would be resurrected after this life and, if they were obedient, receive eternal life (see Moses 5:10–12).

Secular theories posit that the belief in an afterlife is an independent outgrowth of some universal psychological need. But the widespread idea of life after death instead constitutes a sort of ancestral or collective memory (if not a premortal memory) of what was revealed in the beginning and then passed from generation to generation. What President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) once said about some common religious practices also applies to common beliefs such as life after death: “Undoubtedly the knowledge of [it] . . . was carried by the posterity of Adam into all lands, and continued . . . through Noah . . . to those who succeeded him, spreading out into all nations and countries” (“Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 19, 1873, 36).

Thus, the idea of a life beyond this one is so universal because its origin coincides with the origin of the human race itself.

Plain and Precious Truths

As Latter-day Saints, we can help bring hope into the lives of those living without God in the world by confidently bearing our witness of the truth about our existence: death is not the end. In addition, we can answer many questions about life after death because of the plain and precious truths of the restored gospel that have been revealed. Here are brief answers to a few such questions.



What happens to us right after we die?

At the time of death, our spirits separate from our bodies and then enter the spirit world (see James 2:26; Alma 40:11).

What are our spirits like?

Our spirit bodies look like they did in premortal life: human bodies in a perfect adult form (see Ether 3:16; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 131–32). After death, our spirits will have the same attitudes, appetites, and desires we had at the time of our physical death on earth (see Alma 34:34).

What is spirit?

Spirit is a kind of matter, only “more fine or pure” (D&C 131:7).

What is the spirit world like?

There are two major states or divisions among the spirits in the spirit world: paradise and spirit prison. Righteous spirits go to paradise, which is “a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:12). The spirits of people who haven’t yet received the gospel of Jesus Christ are said to be in spirit prison (see 1 Peter 3:18–20). They can still choose good or evil and accept or reject the gospel. The spirits in paradise can preach the gospel to them (see D&C 138). Those whose spirits and bodies are separated for a long time view this separation as “a bondage” (D&C 45:17; 138:50).

What is heaven?

Heaven is generally understood to be the place where God dwells and where righteous people may eventually dwell. In this sense, it is different from the paradise of the spirit world.

What is hell?

In the scriptures, *hell* can refer to one of two things: (1) “the temporary abode in the spirit world for those who were disobedient in mortality” or (2) “the permanent location of those who are not redeemed by the Atonement of Jesus Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Hell,” scriptures.lds.org). In a general sense, it is the spiritual condition suffered by those who have rejected

the gospel. Joseph Smith taught, “The great misery of departed spirits . . . is to know that they come short of the glory that others enjoy and that they might have enjoyed themselves, and they are their own accusers” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 224).

What is resurrection?

Resurrection is the reuniting of spirit and body in a perfected, immortal state (see Alma 11:43).

Who will be resurrected?

All people who have lived on earth will be resurrected (see 1 Corinthians 15:22; Alma 11:44).

When will we be resurrected?

People will be resurrected at different times. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ ushered in the First Resurrection, or resurrection of the just. Some righteous people have already been resurrected since that time. After the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, many



more righteous people will be resurrected. During the Millennium, other good people will be resurrected. After the Millennium, the wicked will be resurrected. (See D&C 76:32–112; 88:97–101.)

What are resurrected bodies like?

Resurrected bodies are flesh and bone (see Luke 24:39), immortal (see Alma 11:45), perfect (see Alma 11:43), glorious, and beautiful. “There is nothing more beautiful to look upon than a resurrected man or woman” (President Lorenzo Snow [1814–1901], *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 99).

What happens after we’re resurrected?

After all people have been resurrected and the Millennium has ended, we will be brought into the presence of God to be judged according to our words, deeds, thoughts, and desires (see Revelation 20:12; Alma 12:14; D&C 137:9). Jesus Christ will be our Judge (see John 5:22, 27–29; Romans 14:10).

What happens after the Final Judgment?

After the Final Judgment, we will receive one of the following eternal rewards:

Celestial kingdom: the home of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and all those who have qualified for eternal life by making and keeping all the gospel covenants (see D&C 76:50–70). This includes those who accept the gospel in the spirit world who would have received it in this life but did not have the opportunity (see D&C 137:7).

Terrestrial kingdom: the home of those good people who did not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ but received it in the spirit world or who were not valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ in life (see D&C 76:71–80).

Telestial kingdom: the home of those who were wicked and did not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, who were not resurrected until after the Millennium (see D&C 76:81–89).

Endless punishment: the final state of the sons of perdition, as well as the devil and his angels (see D&C 76:31–49).

What will people do in the celestial kingdom?

Those who inherit the highest degree of the celestial kingdom will be exalted, which means they will have eternal life, become like our Heavenly Father, and receive all that the Father has. To become like Heavenly Father means to acquire His attributes of perfection, including love and service.¹ It also means to share in His work and glory, which is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Exaltation includes being sealed in marriage for eternity, living in eternal families, and having eternal spirit offspring. (See D&C 76:59, 62; 130:2; 132:19–23.)

What will people do in the other kingdoms?

Those in other kingdoms will be angels, which “are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory” (D&C 132:16). They will not be married or have spirit offspring (see D&C 131:1–4; 132:16–17). ■

NOTE

1. “Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made” (President Marion G. Romney [1897–1988], Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 93).