

Exaltation

Chapter 47

The Plan for Our Progression

When we lived with our Heavenly Father, He explained a plan for our progression. We could become like Him, an exalted being. The plan required that we be separated from Him and come to earth. This separation was necessary to prove whether we would obey our Father's commandments even though we were no longer in His presence. The plan provided that when earth life ended, we would be judged and rewarded according to the degree of our faith and obedience.

From the scriptures we learn that there are three kingdoms of glory in heaven. The Apostle Paul mentioned that he knew a man who was "caught up to the third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2). Paul named two of the kingdoms in heaven: the celestial and the terrestrial (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–42). The celestial is the highest, and the terrestrial is second. Through latter-day revelation we learn that the third kingdom is the telestial kingdom (see D&C 76:81). We also learn that there are three heavens or degrees within the celestial kingdom (see D&C 131:1).

Exaltation

- What is exaltation?

Exaltation is eternal life, the kind of life God lives. He lives in great glory. He is perfect. He possesses all knowledge and all wisdom. He is the Father of spirit children. He is a creator. We can become like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation.

If we prove faithful to the Lord, we will live in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom of heaven. We will become exalted, to live



with our Heavenly Father in eternal families. Exaltation is the greatest gift that Heavenly Father can give His children (see D&C 14:7).

Blessings of Exaltation

- What are some blessings that will be given to those who are exalted?

Our Heavenly Father is perfect, and He glories in the fact that it is possible for His children to become like Him. His work and glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Those who receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ will receive special blessings. The Lord has promised, “All things are theirs” (D&C 76:59). These are some of the blessings given to exalted people:

1. They will live eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see D&C 76:62).
2. They will become gods (see D&C 132:20–23).
3. They will be united eternally with their righteous family members and will be able to have eternal increase.
4. They will receive a fulness of joy.
5. They will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have—all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge (see D&C 132:19–20). President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “The Father has promised through the Son that all that he has shall be given to those who are obedient to His commandments. *They shall increase in knowledge, wisdom, and power, going from grace to grace, until the fulness of the perfect day shall burst upon them*” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:36; italics in original).

Requirements for Exaltation

The time to fulfill the requirements for exaltation is now (see Alma 34:32–34). President Joseph Fielding Smith said, “In order to obtain the exaltation we must accept the gospel and all its covenants; and

take upon us the obligations which the Lord has offered; and walk in the light and the understanding of the truth; and ‘live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God’ ” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:43).

To be exalted, we first must place our faith in Jesus Christ and then endure in that faith to the end of our lives. Our faith in Him must be such that we repent of our sins and obey His commandments.

He commands us all to receive certain ordinances:

1. We must be baptized.
2. We must receive the laying on of hands to be confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
3. Brethren must receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and magnify their callings in the priesthood.
4. We must receive the temple endowment.
5. We must be married for eternity, either in this life or in the next.

In addition to receiving the required ordinances, the Lord commands all of us to:

1. Love God and our neighbors.
 2. Keep the commandments.
 3. Repent of our wrongdoings.
 4. Search out our kindred dead and receive the saving ordinances of the gospel for them.
 5. Attend our Church meetings as regularly as possible so we can renew our baptismal covenants by partaking of the sacrament.
 6. Love our family members and strengthen them in the ways of the Lord.
 7. Have family and individual prayers every day.
 8. Teach the gospel to others by word and example.
 9. Study the scriptures.
 10. Listen to and obey the inspired words of the prophets of the Lord.
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Finally, each of us needs to receive the Holy Ghost and learn to follow His direction in our individual lives.

- How do ordinances and covenants prepare us for exaltation?
- How does faith in Jesus Christ help us obey the commandments?
- Why must we learn to follow the direction of the Holy Ghost to become exalted?

After We Have Been Faithful and Endured to the End

- What happens when we have endured to the end in faithful discipleship to Christ?

The Lord has said, “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). President Joseph Fielding Smith said, “If we will continue in God; that is, keep his commandments, worship him and live his truth; then the time will come when we shall be bathed in the fulness of truth, which shall grow brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:36).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil [died] before you will have learned them. 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” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 268).

Joseph Smith taught: “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God. . . . He was once a man like us; . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 345–46).

Our Heavenly Father knows our trials, our weaknesses, and our sins. He has compassion and mercy on us. He wants us to succeed even as He did.

Imagine what joy each of us will have when we return to our Heavenly Father if we can say: “Father, I lived according to Thy will. I have been faithful and have kept Thy commandments. I am happy to be home again.” Then we will hear Him say, “Well done . . . ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:23).

- Review Matthew 25:23. Think about how you would feel if you heard the Lord say these words to you.

Additional Scriptures

- D&C 132:3–4, 16–26, 37 (pertaining to exaltation)
- D&C 131:1–4 (eternal marriage is key to exaltation)
- D&C 76:59–70 (blessings of celestial glory explained)
- D&C 84:20–21 (the power of godliness is manifest through priesthood ordinances)

For teachers: When you give class members or family members time to ponder gospel truths, reflect on their lives, or think about their love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, you give them an opportunity to be taught by the Holy Ghost.